THE HINDU REVIEW
DECEMBER 2020
CURRENT AFFAIRS | MONTHLY CAPSULE
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Narendra Singh Tomar launches Honey FPO Programme in 5 states

The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar virtually inaugurated Honey Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) Programme in five states, for producing honey. The Honey FPO Programme aims to address the issues faced by the beekeeping industry and also promote honey production in the country. This will also help in achieving the goal of increasing farmer’s income.

These 5 FPOs will be set up by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED). They will be set up at
- East Champaran (Bihar)
- Morena (Madhya Pradesh)
- Bharatpur (Rajasthan)
- Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)
- Sunderbans (West Bengal)

About Honey FPO Programme:
- The Honey FPO Programme has been launched under the Central Sector Scheme for Formation & Promotion of new 10,000 FPOs.
- The Government has approved 2,200 FPOs for the current financial year 2020-21.
- The task of creating these FPOs has been given to Nabard (600 FPOs), Small Farmers’ Agribusiness Consortium (500), National Cooperative Development Corporation (500) and NAFED which will support 50 commodity-specific FPOs and some State-level organisations.

RBI Monetary Policy: Policy Rate unchanged

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headed by Governor Shaktikanta Das, has decided to maintain the status quo on policy rate amid sticky rate of inflation. At this point, the repo rate or the rate at which RBI lends to banks stands unchanged at 4 per cent. The reverse repo rate also stayed unchanged at 3.35 per cent. The MPC committee members voted unanimously in favour of the decision.

The key decisions taken in the Monetary Policy Committee meeting are:
- The repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) has been kept unchanged at 4.00%.
- The reverse repo rate under the LAF has been kept unchanged at 3.35%.
- The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate have been kept unchanged at 4.25%.

RBI Monetary Policy Highlights & Key Decisions:
- Governor Shaktikanta Das proposes to put in place criteria for NBFC dividend distribution, introduces risk-based audit in large NBFCs & co-op banks.
- RTGS will soon be made 24X7 in the next few days.
- The business sentiment of manufacturing firms is gradually improving.
- CPI inflation is seen at 6.8% for Q3 and 5.8% for Q4.
- Real GDP growth for FY21 is projected at -7.5%. Q3 FY-21 GDP is seen at +0.1% while Q4 FY-21 GDP is seen at +0.7%.
- Corporate bond spreads have narrowed to pre-covid levels.
- RBI proposes to enhance limits for contactless card payments from ₹2000 to ₹5000 from Jan 2021.
- On-tap Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) will be expanded to cover other stressed sectors in tandem with Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) scheme.

RBI orders HDFC Bank to halt its digital launches

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued an order to HDFC Bank with regard to certain incidents of outages in the internet banking, mobile banking and payment utilities of the lender over the past 2 years, the private sector bank informed to the stock exchanges. The RBI also
noted the recent outages in the HDFC Bank's internet banking and payment system on November 21, 2020, owing to a power failure in the primary data centre.

The RBI vide Order has advised the Bank to temporarily stop:
- All launches of the Digital Business generating activities planned under its program - Digital 2.0 (to be launched) and other proposed business generating IT applications.
- Sourcing of new credit card customers.
- In addition to this, the order also states that HDFC Bank's board should examine the lapses and fix accountability.

**Reliance Industries tops Fortune India 500 Ranking 2020**

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has topped the 2020 Fortune 500 list of Indian companies, released. The revenue of RIL clocked Rs 615,854.00, accounting for 7% of cumulative revenues and 11 per cent profit of the companies. The country's biggest oil firm, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), bagged the second spot, followed by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at the third position. The list was published by Fortune India, which is part of the Kolkata-based RP Sanjiv Goenka Group.

Here is the list of top 10 companies on the 2020 Fortune India-500 list:
1. Reliance Industries
2. Indian Oil Corporation
3. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
4. State Bank of India
5. Bharat Petroleum Corporation
6. Tata Motors
7. Rajesh Exports
8. Tata Consultancy Services
9. ICICI Bank
10. Larsen & Toubro

**Indian Navy Day: 04 December**

In India, December 4 is observed as the National Navy Day every year, to celebrate the achievements and role of the naval force to the country. The theme of Navy Day 2020 is “Indian Navy Combat Ready, Credible & Cohesive”.

**History of Indian Navy Day:**
The day is marked in recognition of the launch of Operation Trident during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971. During Operation Trident, on December 4 in 1971, the Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels and also killed over 500 Pakistani Navy personnel, meanwhile, the Indian side suffered no losses.

**Some facts about Indian Navy:**
The Indian Navy is the marine branch of the Indian Armed Forces and is led by the President of India as Commander-in-Chief. The Maratha Emperor, Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhosle of the 17th century is considered as “Father of the Indian Navy”.

**Cabinet approves Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana**
The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in the formal sector by encouraging the businesses to do fresh hiring amid the pandemic. ABRY will also incentivize the creation of new employment opportunities under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

**About the Yojana:**
- The Cabinet has approved an expenditure of ₹ 1,584 crores for the current financial year and ₹ 22,810 crores for the entire scheme period from 2020 to 2023.
- The scheme will provide subsidy for two years in respect of new employees engaged on or after October 1, 2020, and up to June 30, 2021.
- The government will pay both 12 per cent employees' contribution and 12 per cent employers' contribution i.e. 24 per cent of wages towards EPF in respect of new employees in establishments employing up to 1,000 employees for two years.
- It will pay only employees’ share of EPF contribution i.e. 12 per cent of wages in respect of new employees in establishments employing more than 1,000 employees for two years.

**Eligibility**
- An employee drawing monthly wage of less than ₹ 15,000 who was not working in any establishment registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) before October 1, 2020, and did not have a Universal Account Number (UAN) or EPF Member account number prior to October 1, 2020, will be eligible for the benefit.
Any EPF member possessing Universal Account Number (UAN) drawing monthly wage of less than ₹15,000 who made exit from employment during COVID pandemic from March 1, 2020, to September 30, 2020, and did not join employment in any EPF covered establishment up to September 30, 2020 will also be eligible to avail benefit.

Centre Launches QRMP scheme for GST payers

The Central Government has launched ‘Quarterly Return filing & Monthly Payment of Taxes (QRMP)’ scheme for small taxpayers under the GST system. Taxpayers with an aggregate annual turnover of up to Rs 5 crore in the preceding financial year and have filed their October GSTR-3B (sales) return by November 30, 2020, are eligible for this scheme. The notifications for the same were issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

About QRMP Scheme:
- Persons with aggregate turnover up to Rs 5 crore would be allowed to furnish their GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B returns on a quarterly basis, beginning January-March quarter of 2020-21. Quarterly GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B can also be filed through an SMS.
- Taxpayers can also make GST payments every month, through challan, with effect from January 1, 2021.
- This can be done either by self-assessment of monthly liability or 35% of net cash liability of previous filed GSTR-3B of the quarter.
- Under this, the registered person or a taxpayer will furnish a return for every quarter, under sub-rule (1) of rule 61A of the Central Goods and Services Tax Rules, 2017 and pay the monthly tax under subsection (7) of section 39 of the same Act.
- After the above changes, the act is named as the Central Goods and Services Tax (Thirteenth Amendment) Rules, 2020.

Bajrang Punia, Elavenil Valarivan bag Sportsperson of the Year awards

Indian athletes, Bajrang Punia (Freestyle-Wrestling) and Elavenil Valarivan (Shooting), bagged the top honours at the virtually held FICCI India Sports Awards 2020 on the back of the 10th Global Sports Summit. The two athletes, who have had an impressive 2019-20 season, won the Sportsperson of the Year awards in their respective categories.

Here is the list of Winner in different Categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sportsperson of the Year (Female)</td>
<td>Elavenil Valarivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sportsperson of the Year (Male)</td>
<td>Bajrang Punia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best State Promoting Sports Award</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Company Promoting Sports (Private Sector)</td>
<td>Anil Kumble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About the award:
The sports awards are an attempt by industry body, Federation of Indian Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to acknowledge and recognise the contribution of sportspersons and various stakeholders who deliver excellent results throughout the year.

Gwalior, Orchha in UNESCO world heritage cities list

The historical fort cities of Gwalior and Orchha in Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of UNESCO's world heritage cities under its The World Heritage Cities Programme. Under the plan, UNESCO will suggest best measures and resources for the development and beautification of these places as per the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape recommendations.

With this inclusion, the total number of UNESCO World Heritage Cities of India will increase to 40.
- The inclusion will lead to the beautification of both cities by the MP Tourism Department in collaboration with UNESCO.
- In this regard, UNESCO team will visit the state in 2021 and will prepare a master plan for their development and conservation under the Historic Urban Landscape recommendation.
- Chemical treatment of historic spots like Mansingh Palace, Gujri Mahal and Sahastrabahu Temple will also be done so that art inscribed on them will become more visible.
- Guards will also be deployed at both places to welcome tourists as per the Indian traditions

About Gwalior:
- Gwalior was established in the 9th century and ruled by Gurjar Pratihar Rajvansh, Tomar, Baghel Kachvaha and Scindias. It occupies a sandstone plateau and consists of memorials, forts and palaces
The famous spots include Sun Temple, Jal Vilas Palace, Memorial of Tansen, Tigra Dam, 15th-century Gujari Mahal Palace among others.

About Orchha:
- Orchha means 'hidden palace', as its name suggests it is popular for its temples and palaces and was the capital of the Bundela kingdom in the 16th century.
- The famous spots in the town are Raj Mahal, Jehangir Mahal, Ramraja Temple, Rai Praveen Mahal, and Laxminarayan Mandir.

Joe Biden, Kamala Harris jointly named Time’s ‘Person of the Year’ 2020

US President-elect, Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been jointly named Time magazine’s 2020 “Person of the Year”. The TIME magazine releases the annual list since 1927, to recognise a person or organisation who affected the news or impacted the country and world the most, for better or worse, during the calendar year.

Apart from this, Time magazine has named the Korean pop group BTS as its Entertainer of the Year, and basketball star LeBron James as Athlete of the Year. Zoom founder Eric Yuan was aptly named Businessperson Of The Year, as the video communications company has come to define the way millions have connected with each other during the pandemic.

India ranks 131 in Human Development Index 2020

According to the report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), India has been dropped two spots to 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index.

According to the report:
- Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Iceland, the report showed.
- Niger is the lowest ranked country at 189, placed among Low human development category, with a score of 0.394.
- India(131), Bhutan (129), Bangladesh (133), Nepal (142), and Pakistan (154) were ranked among countries with medium human development.
- In the BRICS grouping, Russia was 52 in the human development index, Brazil 84, and China 85.

Facts related to India:
- Between 1990 and 2019, India’s life expectancy at birth increased by 11.8 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years, and expected years of schooling increased by 4.5 years.
- India’s GNI per capita increased by about 273.9% between 1990 and 2019. Life expectancy for Indian’s at birth was 69.7 years in 2019, slightly lower than the south Asian average of 69.9 years, but slightly higher than the average of medium human development index groupings in the world at 69.3 years.

What is Human Development Index?
The Human Development Index measures average achievement of the countries in 3 basic dimensions of human development i.e. life expectancy, education and per capita income.

UNEP announces 2020 Champions of the Earth Award

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced six laureates of the 2020 Champions of the Earth award, the UN’s highest environmental honour. The Champions were chosen for their transformative impact on the environment and their leadership in urging bold and decisive action on behalf of the planet and its inhabitants.

The Champions of the Earth Award is presented in 5 categories:
1. Lifetime Achievement,
2. Inspiration and Action,
3. Policy Leadership,
4. Entrepreneur Vision,
5. Science and Innovation.
The 2020 Champions of the Earth Award has been bestowed upon 6 individuals. The list of winners is given below.

- **Policy Leadership:**
  Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji, honoured in the Policy Leadership category for his global climate action work and his commitment to climate-responsive national development

- **Inspiration and Action:**
  Yacouba Sawadogo (Burkina Faso), also honoured in the Inspiration and Action category for teaching farmers his traditional nature-based solution to regenerate their soil and turn barren land into arable land and forest across Africa

- **Inspiration and Action:**
  Nemonte Nenquimo (Ecuador), awarded in the Inspiration and Action category for her leadership and unifying work with indigenous communities that halted drilling in Ecuador’s Amazon rainforest

- **Science and Innovation:**
  Dr Fabian Leendertz (Germany), honoured in the Science and Innovation category for his discoveries in zoonotic and his work in One Health

- **Entrepreneur Vision:**
  Mindy Lubber (USA), recognized in the Entrepreneurial Vision category for her commitment to turning capital markets green by mobilizing top investors and companies and making the business case for climate action and sustainability

- **Lifetime Achievement Award:**
  Professor Robert D. Bullard (USA) who was awarded the Champion of the Earth Lifetime Achievement award for his commitment and service to environmental justice.

**About Champions of the Earth award:**
The UN Environment Program (UNEP) is presenting the Champions of the Earth Award since 2005, to inspire and motivate more people to act for nature. The award recognizes outstanding environmental leaders from the public and private sectors, and from civil society for their pioneering initiatives aimed at healing the planet amid natural and man-made threats and whose activities have had a positive impact on the environment.

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UNESCO launches Bangabandhu award on creative economy

UNESCO has launched an international award named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman following Bangladesh’s proposal. The UN agency’s executive board unanimously adopted the proposal on **UNESCO-Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize** for the “Creative Economy” in its 210th session. This is the first time a UN agency launched an award named after Bangabandhu.

**About the Prize:**
- The award will create the opportunity to spread Bangabandhu’s ideals across the world and inspire the global cultural activists to contribute to the field of the creative economy.
- It will also play a “special” role in branding and image-building of Bangladesh.
- The award will be given every two years with **$50,000 prize money** – three times in six years. The renewal of the award will be discussed later.
- The first UNESCO-Bangabandhu award is set to be given in the 41st session of the UNESCO’s general conference in **November 2021**. Bangladesh proposed the award in **August 2019**.

**About the UNESCO awards:**
The UNESCO launches awards in recognition of the contribution of leaders in several fields, such as education, culture, science and technology, with the financial help of the member states. It had launched 22 awards named after noted individuals or organisations.

**India ranks 111 in Human Freedom Index 2020**

A worldwide ranking of civil, economic and personal freedom, the **Human Freedom Index 2020** was released. **India** was placed at the **111th spot** out of **162 countries**. In 2019, India ranked **94** on the index. The first three spots have been bagged by **New Zealand, Switzerland and Hong Kong. The United States and the United Kingdom** are tied at the 17th spot on the index. War-torn **Syria** ranked the last on the list.

**Facts related to India:**
- India’s scored 6.30 out of 10 in personal freedom and 6.56 in economic freedom. The country’s overall human freedom score was 6.43.
- However, India has been ranked ahead of China and Bangladesh, which ranked 129 and 139 on the 2020 index respectively.
About Human Freedom Index:
Human Freedom Index was published by American think tank Cato Institute and Fraser Institute in Canada. The index takes into account 76 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedoms to rank 162 countries from 2008 to 2018. The institutes noted that the world has seen a notable decline in personal freedom since 2008.

NITI Aayog releases ‘Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India’

NITI Aayog has released a white paper titled ‘Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India’ on 14 December 2020. The ‘Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India’ is a continuation of the work on Health Systems Strengthening. The building blocks for this vision are an interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states.

About the “Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India”:
- The vision of this white paper is to make India’s public health surveillance system more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.
- The citizen-friendly public health surveillance system will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism.
- India aims to provide regional and global leadership in managing events that constitute a public health emergency of international concern.
- Public health surveillance (PHS) is an important function, requiring primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care.
- The white paper lays out India’s vision of 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.

First Prize:
- Sreenivas Karanam, Bengaluru was selected for the FIRST prize for his contribution in developing a cost-effective customized technical solution under the brand ‘C mobile’, for deep-sea communication, operating along the Kerala coast, facilitating communication among fishermen and issue of weather alerts etc.
- The service enables the fishermen to have one-one voice calls, group calls, SMS, Location services and Emergency services while they are out of GSM coverage area. The service is available from Thiruvananthapuram to Calicut, almost 500km along Kerala coast, with devices installed in nearly 900 motorboats.

Second Prize:
- Subrat Kar, New Delhi was selected for the SECOND prize for his innovative solution on development & deployment of a large scale sensor network and devices to avoid a train-animal collision, which works without interfering with natural movements/behaviour of animals, thereby helping in wildlife conservation.
- The system under the pilot phase is installed in Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand, to prevent elephant deaths by train-elephant collision.

About Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards:
- This award is given to motivate the Telecom Skill ecosystem, DoT launched Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards scheme in 2017, to reward the successful telecom skilled people for their special contributions in the areas of Telecom Skilling, Telecom Services, Telecom Manufacturing, Telecom Applications in deploying telecom dependent sectoral solutions for different fields such as agriculture, commerce, health, education etc. The award was named after Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Ji to commemorate his birth centenary.

Indian Boxers bag 3 Gold at Cologne Boxing World Cup
- Indian boxers have bagged 9 medals including three gold, two silver and four bronze at the Cologne Boxing World Cup 2020, held in Cologne, Germany. India finished 2nd in the overall Medals List, Germany topped the list with 16 medals. The Cologne Boxing World 2020 was hosted by the European Boxing Confederation (EUBC).
List of Medal Winners
- **Gold:** The three gold medals for India were bagged by Amit Panghal (52kg), Manisha Moun (57kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) in their respective categories.
- **Silver:** Silver medals were claimed by Sakshi Choudhary (57kg) and Satish Kumar (91kg).
- **Bronze:** Sonia Lather (57kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) Gaurav Solanki (57kg) and Mohamed Hussamudin (57kg) claimed the bronze medal in their respective categories.

**World Bank approves several projects to support development in India**

The World Bank has approved 4 India projects worth over **$800 million**. The projects will support a range of development initiatives that supports the efforts of India to rebuild itself by creating a sustainable and resilient economy.

The projects that have been approved are:
1. **$400 million** Second Accelerating India’s COVID-19 Social Protection Response Program.
2. **$100 million** Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth Project (CHIRAAG).
3. **$68 million** Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project.
4. **$250 million** Second Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2).

**In Brief:**

**$400 Million Second Accelerating India’s COVID-19 Social Protection Response Program:**
- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a $400 million Second Accelerating India’s COVID-19 Social Protection Response Program.

- The project supports and protects India’s efforts to provide social assistance to poor and vulnerable households, severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It is the 2nd operation in a programmatic series of 2. The 1st operation of $750 million was approved in May 2020. The Program builds on the outcomes achieved by the 1st operation.

**CHIRAAG project:**
- **Amount sanctioned: USD 100 million**
- **CHIRAAG aims at promoting nutrition-supportive agriculture for tribal households in Chhattisgarh**
- It will develop sustainable production systems that allow tribal households in remote areas of Chhattisgarh to practice round-the-year production of diversified and nutritious food.
- It will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region of the state where a large population is undernourished and poor.
- The project will benefit over **180,000 households** from about **1,000 villages** in eight districts of Chhattisgarh.

**Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project**
- **Amount approved: USD 68 million**
- It will improve classroom instruction; create opportunities for the professional development of teachers, and build technology systems to provide students and teachers with more access to blended and online learning as well as allow better monitoring of policies and programs.
- It will enhance overall quality education in the state

**Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2):**
- **Financial aid approved: USD 250 million.**
- DRIP-2 will improve the safety and performance of existing dams across various states of India, and strengthen dam safety by building dam safety guidelines; bring in global experience; and introduce newer technologies.

**Good Governance Day: 25 December**

In India, **Good Governance Day (Sushasan Divas)** is observed annually on **25th December**. In this day nation celebrates the birth anniversary of **Bharat Ratna** and former-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Good
Governance Day was established in 2014 to honour Prime Minister Vajpayee by fostering awareness among the Indian people of accountability in government. In keeping with this principle, the Good Governance Day has been declared to be a working day for the government.

About Atal Bihari Vajpayee:
Atal Bihari Vajpayee served as the Prime Minister of India for three times. His first term was for only 13 days in 1996. He served his second term for a period of thirteen months from March 1998 to April 1999 and then a full term from 1999 to 2004. His first entry into parliament was in 1962 through the Rajya Sabha. He was elected to the Lok Sabha seven times. In 2015, Mr Vajpayee was conferred the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

ICC Awards of the Decade 2020 announced

The winners of the prestigious ICC Awards of the Decade were announced on 28th December 2020. The ICC Awards of The Decade recognise the best players across Cricket over the past 10 years.

List of Winners
- ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade: MS Dhoni (India)

ICC Men’s Awards
- Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
- ICC Men’s ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
- ICC Men’s T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)
- ICC Men’s Test Cricketer of the Decade: Steve Smith (Australia)
- ICC Men’s Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kyle Coetzer (Scotland)

ICC Women’s Award
- Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Women’s ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Women’s T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Women’s Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kathryn Bryce (Scotland)

Banking and Financial Current Affairs

- Private lender YES Bank has launched an ‘SMS Pay’ functionality on POS terminals, which would allow merchants to accept contactless and remote payments from their customers. YES Bank has collaborated with French payment services company Worldline to launch the new facility.
- The Reserve Bank of India has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system will be made available round the clock on all days of the year with effect from 00:30 hours on December 14, 2020. Presently RTGS system is available for customers between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM.
- The private lender ICICI Bank has launched a new version of its mobile payment app called iMobile Pay, to offer payment and banking services to customers of any bank. The latest version of the app is interoperable and will now allow payments and other banking services to even those customers who do not hold an ICICI Bank account.
- The Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the licence of Karad Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd in Maharashtra, as it does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. As such, it does not comply with the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. More than 99 per cent of the depositors of the bank will get full payment of their deposits from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).
- Bank of Baroda (BoB) has recently launched the Atmanirbhar Women Scheme as part of its Baroda Gold Loan. This scheme aims to target the self-reliant woman in India. Under the scheme, the bank is offering loans at 0.50 per cent concession for women. The bank under the gold loan scheme is offering agri-gold loan at 0.25 per cent concession and for a retail loan at 0.50 per cent concession.
- RBL Bank and ICICI Prudential have joined hands under a bancassurance partnership. 398 RBL Bank branches across 28 states will distribute ICICI Prudential Life’s protection and savings products. The protection products of ICICI Prudential Life will help the bank’s customers to develop a strong financial plan and its long-term savings products will help the customers of the bank to achieve their financial goals.
• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to set up an Automated Banknote Processing Centre (ABPC) in Jaipur for the receipt, storage and dispatch of currency notes.

• Canara Bank has launched FX 4 U that enables its entire internet banking users to handle forex transactions hassle free. FX 4 U is used for forex remittance through internet banking. With this development, eligible customers will be able to undertake remittance facility in adherence to the FEMA regulations 1999.

• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 50.00 lakh on The Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd in Kerala. This fine is imposed for non-compliance with directions issued on Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms and on Management of Advances-UCBs.

• Reserve Bank of India has further extended the restrictions on crisis-ridden Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank by three months till 31 March 2021. The bank has also received four Expression of Interest (EoI) for its revival. To examine them, the bank would need some more time. These proposals will be examined by the bank with regard to their viability and feasibility taking into account the best interest of the depositors.

• ICICI Bank has launched an online platform ‘Infinite India’ to support foreign companies to establish or expand business in India. The one-stop portal will offer banking solutions as well as value-added services such as the incorporation of a business entity, corporate filings, licences and registrations, HR services, compliances and taxation among others.

• Bank of Baroda (BoB) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard under which the bank would offer customised services along with a host of facilities to account holders. The bank has also renewed its existing MoU with the Indian Army to offer specially customised banking services through “Baroda Military Salary Package”.

• The Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the banking licence issued to Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd, Kolhapur, Maharashtra to carry on banking business in India. The Reserve Bank cancelled the licence of the Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd as it had breached the minimum net worth requirement for two quarters in the financial year 2019-20.

• The UBS has projected India’s real GDP to contract 10.5% in FY21, in its Global Economics & Markets Outlook 2021-2022 report. For the fiscal 2021-22 (FY22) UBS expects India’s real GDP growth to rebound to +10% in FY22. UBS also estimates India’s GDP to stabilise at 6.2 per cent YoY in FY23.

• The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has marginally raised its GDP forecast for India to a contraction of 9.9% in 2020-21 (FY21) from its earlier projection of (-)10.2% in September 2020. OECD expects the GDP to rebound to 8% in 2021-22 (FY22) and 5% in 2022-23 (FY23).

• The Japanese research and brokerage house Nomura has projected India to be the fastest-growing Asian economy in 2021. Nomura has estimated the gross domestic product (GDP) growth of India for the calendar year 2021 (CY21) at 9.9%. For the calendar year 2020 (CY20), Nomura expects GDP growth at -7.1 per cent.

• Fitch Ratings has revised the GDP growth rate for India in its Global Economic Outlook, and now expects the economy to contract 9.4 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21, as compared to (-)10.5 per cent forecast earlier. Fitch has also projected the FY22 GDP growth at 11 per cent and 6.3 per cent growth in FY23.

• The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has projected India’s economy to contract 8 per cent in 2020, as against (-)9.0 per cent previously forecast. In its latest Asian Development Outlook report released on 10 December 2020, ADB also expects the GDP of India to bounce back with growth of 8.0 per cent in 2021.

• Rating agency CRISIL has lowered the contraction rate of India’s GDP and now expects the growth rate of the Indian economy to contract 7.7% in the ongoing fiscal 2020-21, compared to the 9% forecast in September 2020, due to “faster-than-expected” recovery in the second quarter. For the fiscal 2021-22 (FY22), CRISIL expects the growth to bounce back to 10%.

• S&P Global Ratings (previously Standard & Poor’s) has raised India’s GDP growth projection for the FY21 (2020-21) to – 7.7 per cent from – 9 per cent estimated earlier. The lower contraction rate is based on rising demand and falling COVID infection rates. The US-based S&P rating agency has projected India’s growth to rebound to 10 per cent in the next fiscal, i.e. 2021-22 (FY22).
• The State Bank of India, in its research report ‘Ecowrap’ has revised the GDP growth of India at (-) 7.4 percent in FY21. Earlier this forecast was (-) 10.9 percent. The SBI research report has also forecast India’s GDP growth in FY22 at 11 percent.

• The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has projected the Indian economy to contract 7.3 per cent in FY21, compared to -12.6% forecast in September 2020. The Delhi based economic think tank released its mid-year review of the Indian economy virtually on 21 December 2020.

• India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has revised India’s GDP estimate for the current financial year 2020-21 (FY21) to -7.8 per cent from -11.8 per cent estimated earlier. This lower contraction rate is mainly due to the easing of COVID-19 curbs and better-than-expected recovery in the second quarter. Ind-Ra has also estimated the GDP to grow by 9.6% in 2021-22 (FY22).

• The domestic rating agency, ICRA Ratings expects the technical recession in the country’s economy to end in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal, limiting the contraction in the GDP to 7.8 per cent in the financial year 2021.

Business Current Affairs

• The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has given its in-principle approval for the merger of Bharti AXA General Insurance with ICICI Lombard. The merged entity will have a market share of around 8.7 per cent on a proforma basis in the general insurance business.

• Axis Bank Ltd in partnership with Rupifi and Visa launched ‘Axis Bank Rupifi Business Credit Card’ for MSMEs(Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). This Contactless Co-Branded credit card, powered by Visa is applicable only to the MSMEs businesses that transact on the aggregator platforms partnered with Rupifi PAN (Permanent Account Number) India for their business purchases. The card offers credit solutions to such MSMEs. It is only for domestic transactions.

• The United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has announced to invest $54 million in India to support the development of critical infrastructure projects in the country in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The DFC will invest this $54 million in equity for the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) in India.

• Punjab National Bank (PNB) has launched a tech-based loan management solution ‘LenS-The Lending Solution’, to speed up and maintain accuracy in online loan processing and sanctioning of credit proposals. It is envisaged to be implemented in a phased manner for all kinds of loans. Under the Mudra scheme, the processing and sanction of credit proposals up to Rs 10 lakh including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) loans (fresh, renewal, enhancement and review) will be done by LenS.

• Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Ltd. has launched an electronic spot platform, “BSE E-Agricultural Markets Ltd (BEAM)”, for agricultural commodities through its subsidiary BSE Investments Ltd. The platform aims to boost the competitiveness of the Indian agricultural market by enhancing the strength of the BSE in financial markets, market technology and its vibrant ecosystem.

• Digital financial services platform Paytm has launched a 24x7 RTGS facility to support the companies that make high-value transactions. Paytm Payout is the only service provider that offers seamless round the clock money transfers through Wallet, UPI, IMPS, NEFT & RTGS.

• Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company (Kotak Mutual Fund), has launched Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds, India’s first diversified REIT Mutual Fund. REIT stands for Real Estate Investment Trust.

• ICICI Bank has announced that it is collaborating with Google to issue FASTag. It has become the first bank to join hands with Google Pay for the issuance of FASTag. Customers will now be able to order, track and recharge ICICI Bank FASTag via the Google Pay app.

International Current Affairs

• New Zealand has declared a “climate emergency” and promised to make its public sector carbon neutral by 2025. New Zealand now joins 32 other countries that have declared a climate emergency. They include Japan, Canada, France and the United Kingdom.

• The first coal-based power plant of Arab Gulf country is being developed in Saih Shuaib, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The 2,400MW Hassyan clean coal power station will be built at an estimated cost of $ 3.4 billion.
- Bangladesh has signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan, which will allow duty-free access to a range of goods between the two countries and hence boost bilateral trade between them. Under the PTA, 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty free access to Bhutan, while 34 items from Bhutan will get duty free access into Bangladesh. Further items can be added in the list later on the basis of discussion between the two countries.

- China has become the second country in the world to unfurl its national flag on the moon surface. Earlier this feat was achieved only by the USA when it planted its flag on the Moon during the Apollo mission in 1969. If the return journey concludes successfully, China becomes the only third country globally to have samples from the moon. Till date, this record is maintained only by the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s.

- Kuwait Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has re-appointed Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah as prime minister. The move comes two days after Sheikh Sabah submitted his government’s resignation in a procedural step following parliamentary polls.

- The Prime Minister of Romania, Ludovic Orban has stepped down from his post after his ruling National Liberal Party (PNL) lost in 2020 parliamentary election. Following this, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis appointed the Minister of National Defense, Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă as the interim prime minister of the country.

- The Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched an initiative called, the Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX), for its developing member countries. The bank has allocated USD 9 billion for APVAX.

- The Hawker Culture of street food in Singapore has been inducted by UNESCO in its prestigious ‘Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity’. The Hawker Culture is a popular Singaporean style of street dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban environment.

- The Myanmar Navy has officially inducted the submarine INS Sindhuvir, which was handed over by the Indian Navy to the country in October 2020. This is the first submarine in the Myanmar Navy’s arsenal. INS Sindhuvir has been renamed as UMS Minye Theink hathu by the Myanmar Navy.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has embarked on a three-city visit on 28 November 2020, to personally review the COVID-19 vaccine development and manufacturing process at facilities in these cities. Facilities visited by PM Modi are Zydus Biotech Park in Ahmedabad, Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad and Serum Institute of India in Pune.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chaired the 33rd PRAGATI meeting to review multiple projects, grievances and programmes. PRAGATI stands for “Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation”. The projects worth around Rs 1.41 lakh crore, related to ten states and union territories, were reviewed.

- The Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar recently unveiled a new initiative called Sahakar Pragya. Sahakar Pragya is an initiative of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), to help in capacity development of the cooperative sector in India, through the training programme.

- The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda has launched the first-ever virtual edition of Aadi Mahotsav – Madhya Pradesh. The event will showcase the tribal traditions of the various tribal communities by having their crafts and natural products on display.

- United Kingdom Prime Minister, Boris Johnson is expected to be the chief guest at 2021 Republic day with Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally inviting him. Johnson, on his part, has invited PM Modi to the G-7 summit in the United Kingdom next year. The last British prime minister at the Republic Day parade was John Major in 1993.
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- The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar virtually inaugurated Honey Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) Programme in five states, for producing honey.

- The 9th edition of the International Sand Art Festival and the 31st edition of the Konark Festival has kicked-off in Odisha. International Sand Art Festival is being held at the Chandrabhaga Beach of Konark in Puri district of Odisha. About 70 artists from across the country are taking part in the festival. The world-renowned sand artist and Padmashree Awardee, Sudarsan Pattnaik, has been appointed as Chief Curator of the festival.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the construction work of the Agra Metro project in Agra, Uttar Pradesh. The Agra Metro project comprises 2 corridors with a total length of 29.4 km. It would connect major tourist attractions like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Sikandra with railway stations and bus stands.

- The Union Cabinet has approved a scheme called the Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Initiative (PM-WANI), to improve wireless connectivity and pave the way for free wireless internet in public spaces across the country.

- The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has inaugurated the 1.5 km long Koilwar bridge over Sone river in Bihar through Video Conferencing. This newly inaugurated bridge is a part of the six-lane bridge being made in place of the existing two-lane bridge, for both rail and road traffic, which is 138 years old.

- The Manila-based multilateral lending agency Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a USD 2.5 million (about Rs 18 crore) technical assistance to support advanced biofuel development in India. The grant will be funded from the Asia Clean Energy Fund, financed by the Government of Japan under the Clean Energy Financing Partnership Facility, and the Republic of Korea’s e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has delivered the inaugural address at FICCI’s 93rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Convention via video conferencing. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has organised the convention from December 11 to 14, 2020. The theme for the FICCI 93rd AGM is ‘Inspired India’. The Prime Minister also inaugurated the virtual FICCI Annual Expo 2020.

- The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), India and the Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control, Myanmar conducted the 5th edition of the India-Myanmar Bilateral Meeting on Drug Control Cooperation. The Indian delegation was led by the Director-General Narcotics Control Bureau, Shri Rakesh Asthana.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the 30,000 megawatt (MW) capacity hybrid renewable energy park in Kutch district of Gujarat. It will be the largest renewable energy park of its kind in the world. It is expected to play a major role in fulfilling India’s vision of generating 450 GW (4,50,000 mw) of power by 2030.

- United Kingdom Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to join the UK-hosted G-7 summit 2021. UK Prime Minister Johnson has also accepted the very generous invitation to attend India’s Republic Day celebrations in January. PM Johnson will attend India's annual Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

- India has pledged a sum of USD 1 million to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), towards its scientific research budget, to ensure an atmosphere of Clean Sport globally. The contribution made by India is the highest among contributions made by other world governments, including China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

- The Minister of State for Skill Development, Raj Kumar Singh has inaugurated the first Centre of Excellence (CoE) for 'skill development in the power sector' in Gurugram. The CoE has been established in the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy, Gurugram, Haryana.

- The Union Power Ministry, R. K. Singh has framed the new Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020. These rules shall empower the consumers of electricity and added that these Rules emanate from the conviction that the power systems exist to serve the consumers and the consumers have rights to get the reliable services and quality electricity.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch ‘SEHAT’ – Health Insurance Scheme for the entire Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 26th December. This scheme will cover the remaining One crore population which was not covered under Ayushman Bharat Scheme. Under Ayushman Bharat PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), eligible beneficiaries were covered under Health Cover of Rs 5 Lakh.
• The Government of India and the World Bank signed a $500 million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. The project will also enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in mainstreaming safety and green technologies. The $500 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development a lending arm of World Bank Group, has a maturity of 18.5 years including a grace period of five years.

• The Union Cabinet approved revised guidelines for Direct-to-Home (DTH) broadcasting services, allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as increasing the licence period to 20 years.

• The Cabinet approved the merger of four government-run film and media units — the Films Division, the Directorate of Film Festivals, the National Film Archives of India and the autonomous body Children's Film Society, with the National Film Development Corporation.

• Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri has launched E-Sampada, a new web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day. The new application provides a single-window for all the services including an allotment for over one lakh government residential accommodations, office space allotment to government organisations in 45 office complexes in 28 cities and booking of 1,176-holiday homerooms.

• ‘New Bhaupur- New Khurja section’ of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) will be inaugurated by the PM Narendra Modi on 29th December, 2020 at 11 AM through video conferencing. During the event, Prime Minister will also inaugurate EDFC’s Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj. New Bhaupur- New Khurja section of EDFC is 351 km and situated in Uttar Pradesh. It is built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crores.

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off the country’s first-ever fully-automated driverless train service on the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro. Apart from this, PM also launched fully operational National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) on the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro, to connect DMRC with the NCMC service.

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off the 100th 'Kisan Rail' on 28th December 2020. The 100th run of the Kisan Rail was flagged off from Sangola in Maharashtra to Shalimar in West Bengal virtually. Kisan Rail is a mobile cold storage to move perishable things like fruits, vegetables, milk, fish, etc., with complete security.

### States Current Affairs

• Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath rang the bell at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), to mark the listing of bonds of Lucknow Municipal Corporation on the exchange. The bonds of LMC were launched on November 13, with a coupon rate of 8.5 per cent and had tenure of 10 years. The issuance had garnered 4.5 times subscription.

• West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee named the newly built "Majerhat bridge" in Kolkata as 'Jai Hind' bridge to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Subhash Chandra Bose. The new bridge has been built in the place of an old one which collapsed in September 2018. It is 650-metres long and connects the Central part of Kolkata to the Southwestern suburbs of Behala and others.

• The Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a loan of $190 million (approx Rs 1,400 crore) to modernize and upgrade the power distribution system in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The financial-assistance by ADB will be used for the Bengaluru Smart Energy Efficient Power Distribution Project.

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed the International Bharathi Festival 2020 through video conferencing. The festival was organised by Vanavil Cultural Centre in Chennai to celebrate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathi, an eminent writer, poet and journalist from Tamil Nadu.
- The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy has inaugurated the National Centre for Divyang Empowerment (NCDE) at the CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet near Hyderabad, Telangana.

- The International Hockey Federation (FIH) had announced that the 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup will be hosted in Odisha, for a second consecutive time. The tournament will be held at two venues, Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

- The SoftBank-backed mobility platform, Ola has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Tamil Nadu government, to set up its first factory in the state, at an investment of Rs 2,400 crore.

- The Government of Maharashtra has approved the Unified Development Control and Promotion Regulations, (UDCPR), to strengthen and bring uniformity in the real estate construction laws of the state.

- Uttar Pradesh government will launch a special program to double the income of farmers. The program named as "Kisan Kalyan Mission" will cover all assembly constituencies of the state.

- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a US $4.21 million project readiness financing (PRF) facility for the preparation of infrastructure development projects to improve urban amenities and develop tourism infrastructure in Tripura.

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed $300 million loan agreement with the Government of India to upgrade rural power distribution networks in Uttar Pradesh. This upgradation helps to provide reliable electricity supply to consumers in the state. This is the first tranche of the loan for the Uttar Pradesh Power Distribution Network Rehabilitation Project.

- The Uttar Pradesh government has launched a special campaign 'Varasat (natural succession) to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas. This is a first of its kind campaign in the state which aims to put an end the land-related issues in the rural areas and eradicate the exploitation of the villagers over succession rights by land mafias, who generally target disputed properties. The two-month-long special drive will continue till 15th February 2020.

- Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan has dedicated West Bengal’s first oil and gas reserve, ‘Bengal Basin’, to the nation. The Bengal Basin is explored and owned by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). It is the eight producing basins of India by ONGC.

- Karnataka government has unveiled the Farmer Registration and Unified beneficiary Information System (FRUITS), an e-governance portal, to create a repository of farmland information and farm loan details on a single platform. All farmers will be registered and given an identification number on the portal. Canara Bank has agreed to run FRUITS on a pilot basis.

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has unveiled an 18-feet tall statue of late former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of his 96th birth anniversary at the historic Ridge in the state capital. The statue has been built at a cost of Rs 1.08 crore. The Ridge Maidan also houses statues of Mahatma Gandhi and former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

- The Chief Minister Secretariat of Bihar, the Disaster Management Department besides the National Informatics Centre (NIC) of the state have jointly been chosen as winners in the "pandemic category" Digital India Awards 2020.

- India’s first hot air balloon wildlife safari in a tiger reserve was launched in the world-famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve by Madhya Pradesh forest minister Vijay Shah. Now like Africa’s forests, tourists in India will also enjoy hot air balloon wildlife safari.

- The country’s first pollinator park with over 40 species of butterflies, honeybees, birds and insects has been developed over four acres at Haldwani, Uttarakhand. The objective behind developing the park is to conserve various pollinator species, create awareness among people in general about the importance of conservation of these species and to promote further research on various aspects of pollination, including a threat to habitat and impact of pollution on pollinators.

### Schemes/Committees

- West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee has launched a massive campaign titled ‘Duare Sarkar’ (government at doorsteps) to aware people about the 11 state-run welfare schemes and help them avail its benefits. The two-month-long outreach programme has been launched keeping in view the 2021 state assembly elections which are due in April-May.
- Punjab Chief Minister Captain, **Amarinder Singh** has launched Mobile Application and web portal called ‘PR Insight’, to improve the delivery of citizen-centric services, based upon the feedback of its citizens on government policies. The basic objective of PR Insight is to re-orient the existing schemes and programmes of the state government to the people’s satisfaction after meticulously monitoring their feedback.

- The **Central Government** has set up an Apex Committee for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (AIPA) for achieving its goals under the global deal. The 17-member committee comprised of members from **13 key ministries of the Union Government**. The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) secretary **R P Gupta** will be the head of this committee and the additional secretary, MoEFCC, **Ravi Shankar Prasad** will be the vice-chairperson. The Environment ministry has enlisted as many as 16 functions for the APIA.

- The **Union Government** has decided to constitute a High-Level Committee (HLC) to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The High-Level Committee will be headed by the Union Home Minister, **Amit Shah**. This HLC will decide on the activities for a one-year-long commemoration beginning **23 January 2021**, as a tribute and mark of gratitude to the contribution made by Netaji in India’s freedom struggle.

**Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

- **India and Finland** signed an MoU for developing cooperation in the field of **Environment protection and biodiversity conservation**. The MoU was signed by Environment Minister **Prakash Javadekar** from the Indian side and his Finnish counterpart **Krista Mikkonen** through video-mode.

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the **Government of India** have signed a USD **132.8 million** loan agreement for **Meghalaya Power Distribution Sector Improvement Project**. The project aims to strengthen and modernize the distribution network and improve the quality of power supplied to households, industries, and businesses in the northeastern state of Meghalaya.

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the **Government of India** have inked **$50 million** policy-based loan agreement to improve financial management procedures and operational efficiencies in West Bengal. Titled as the **'West Bengal Public Finance Management Investment Programme'**, the project will help to achieve more fiscal savings, promote informed decision making, and improve service delivery in the state.

- The **Government of India** and the **United States of America (USA)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of **Intellectual Property Cooperation**. As a part of this MoU, the two sides will develop Biennial Work Plan to implement the MoU which will include the detailed planning for carrying out the co-operation activities including the scope of action.

- **National Thermal Power Corporation Limited** (NTPC), a PSU under Ministry of Power, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM)**, Bhopal, for the implementation of **Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NLRP)**. IIFM Bhopal is an Autonomous Institute under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**.

- Consulting firm **PwC India** has collaborated with the **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** and **YuWaah (Generation Unlimited in India)** to upskill **300 million** young Indians over the next 10 years. This collaboration is part of PwC’s global multi-sector partnership with UNICEF and Generation Unlimited to upskill and provide about **1.8 billion** youngsters with socio-economic opportunities from school to work by **2030**.

- Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and **Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev** co-chaired the virtual Summit held between the two countries, to strengthen strategic partnership among them. The Government of India also approved a US **$448 million Line of Credit** for four developmental projects in Uzbekistan in the fields of road construction, sewerage treatment and information technology.
• The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria on Technology Cooperation in the Road Infrastructure Sector. The MoU will further strengthen ties, promote long-standing bilateral relations and enhance trade and regional integration between the two countries.

• The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) has signed an MoU with cGanga, a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India.

• The Government of India and the World Bank have signed a $400 million project to protect vulnerable groups in urban and peri-urban areas across the country impacted by COVID-19. This is the second such assistance in the series of two ‘Accelerating India’s COVID-19 Social Protection Programme’.

• The Government of India and the New Development Bank (NDB) have signed a loan agreement worth $1,000 million for ‘supporting India’s economic recovery from COVID-19’. The loan has a tenor of 30 years, including a 5-year grace period. The programme will support Indian Government in mitigating the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic and enable economic recovery in the rural areas.

• SBI General Insurance partnered with IntrCity RailYatri, to provide travel insurance of ₹5 lakh on tickets for bus commuters opting to travel through IntrCity RailYatri. The travel cover is offered on buying the ticket.

• The Central Bank of India has launched a unique variant of a contactless debit card under the name ‘RuPay Select’, in association with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). Central Bank RuPay Select Debit cardholders will be able to avail complimentary membership and concessional access to golf courses, gyms, spas and restaurants.

• The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced to provide Rs 2,100 crore loan to the Tripura government for the development of urban areas and tourism in the northeastern state. From the total fund of Rs 2,100 crore, Rs 1600 crore will be for urban development and Rs 500 crore for the tourism sector.

• The UN Women and Kerala government have collaborated to establish India’s first Gender Data Hub. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in this regard in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Three key areas of cooperation, as specified in the MoU, will be setting up the Gender Data Centre at The Gender Park, launching the second edition of the International Conference on Gender Equality, and increasing engagement on the global normative frameworks on gender equality and empowerment of women.

• PayU with Google Pay has introduced tokenised payments flow for Indian merchants. With the digital token linked to the phone and card information tokenised, Google Pay users can make repeat payments seamlessly and securely. Through the option of one-click payment, one doesn’t need to re-enter the payment data, as the OTP is read automatically and the payment is processed instantaneously.

• AU Small Finance Bank has announced a strategic partnership with ICICI Prudential Life Insurance to offer life insurance solutions. The tie-up aims to deliver "paperless, secure, and hassle-free life insurance".

Appointments/Resignations (National & International)

• Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has appointed senior IAS officer Utpal Kumar Singh as Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and Lok Sabha Secretariat. His appointment will come into effect from December 1, 2020. He will succeed incumbent Snehlata Shrivastava.

• The Government of India has appointed IAS officer Varsha Joshi as the new Chairperson of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

• Footwear major Bata Shoe Organization has appointed Sandeep Kataria as the new global Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He is the first Indian to be appointed to the global role of Bata (Headquarter-Lausanne, Switzerland). He takes over from Alexis Nasard, who has stepped down after almost five years in the role.

• Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhary has been appointed as the 27th Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO). His appointment is effective from 1st December 2020.
• Srinagar born Wushu coach and the first Dronacharya Awardee from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Kuldeep Handoo is appointed as the Ambassador of Fit India movement.

• US-based Indian-origin health expert, Anil Soni has been appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the newly-created “The World Health Organization (WHO) Foundation”.

• The International Golf Federation (IGF) elected Annika Sorenstam as its new president effective January 1, 2021. IGF President, Peter Dawson, is stepping down after 10 years of leadership and service. Sorenstam, a 72-time winner on the LPGA Tour and former No. 1 from Sweden.

• Zena Wooldridge from England has been elected as the World Squash Federation President. She will become the 10th WSF President to serve since the Federation’s inception in 1967. She is the second female President after New Zealand’s Susie Simcock. She replaces outgoing President Jacques Fontaine, from France. She previously served six years as President of the European Squash Federation between 2013-2019.

• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the re-appointment of Uday Kotak as Managing Director of Kotak Mahindra Bank for a further period of three years, with effect from January 1, 2021.

• The CEO of Prasar Bharati, Shashi Shekhar Vempati has been elected as the Vice President of Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) for a period of three years. Prasar Bharati is India’s largest public broadcasting agency.

• Sukhbir Singh Sandhu has been given six months extension as the chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

• Senior IPS officer, Satyendra Garg has assumed Andaman and Nicobar DGP charge. Garg, a 1987-batch IPS officer was posted as joint secretary in the Union home ministry. He was handing the North East division in the home ministry as a joint secretary before being repatriated to his cadre. Among other top-level reshuffle IPS officer, Ranvir Singh Krishna is named the police chief of Puducherry. He will replace 1988-batch IPS officer Balaji Srivastava who will assume charge in Delhi. Srivastav has been transferred to the Delhi Police.

• Managing Director of logistics major Transport Corporation of India Limited, Vineet Agarwal has taken over as the new President of The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham). Sumant Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director of ReNew Power, is the new Senior Vice-President of Assocham.

• Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has been nominated as the board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI). The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar.

Ranks and Reports

• Lahore, the cultural capital Pakistan, has been ranked as the world's most polluted city, according to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index (AQI). Lahore reported a particulate matter (PM) rating of 423. New Delhi stood second with a PM of 229, while Nepal’s capital Kathmandu ranked the third with a PM of 178.

• In the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020, India has been ranked at 8th spot globally in the list of countries most affected by terrorism in 2019. With a score of 9.592, Afghanistan has topped the index as the worst terror impacted nation among the 163 countries. It is followed by Iraq (8.682) and Nigeria (8.314) at second and third place respectively.

• Chairperson of HCL Technologies, Roshni Nadar Malhotra has topped the list of wealthiest women in India, according to the second edition of ‘Kotak Wealth Hurun–Leading Wealthy Women’ report. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon and Leena Gandhi Tewari of USV are at the second and third rank respectively in the Kotak Wealth Hurun wealthy women list 2020.

• The Nongpok Sekmai Police Station in Manipur topped the list of best police stations in India, while Sooramangalam All Women Police Station at Salem, Tamil Nadu was adjudged the second best police station in the country. The Kharsang PS, Arunachal Pradesh’s Changlang district was adjudged the country’s third-best police station.

• India is ranked at 10th place in the ‘Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021’, released on 7th December 2020. The overall score of India is 63.98. It is for the second time in a row that India emerged among the top 10 countries with higher climate performance from among 58 economies. India was at 9th spot last year in the index.
### Sports Current Affairs

- Indian cricket team skipper **Virat Kohli** scripted another record in the game. He broke **Sachin Tendulkar’s record** and became the quickest batsman to complete **22,000 runs**.
- **Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes-Great Britain)** has won the **2020 Bahrain Grand Prix** at Bahrain International Circuit, Bahrain. The race was the fifteenth round of the **2020 Formula One World Championship**. This is the **11th victory** for Hamilton of the season, and 95th **F1 win** of his career.
- **Virat Kohli** became the fastest to reach **12,000 runs** in **One-day International cricket**. Kohli breached the mark in the third ODI against **Australia in Canberra**. He got to the milestone in his **242nd inning** thus bettering the previous record set by **Sachin Tendulkar**, who got his 12000th run in his **300th inning**.
- **Dawid Malan** of **England** has attained the highest-ever rating points for batsmen in the **MRF Tyres ICC Men’s T20I Player Rankings**. The 33-year-old Malan has reached **915 points**, and thus became the **first player to cross the 900-point mark in the format**.
- **New Zealand** all-rounder, **Corey Anderson** has announced his retirement from international cricket. Anderson has played **13 Tests, 49 ODIs** and **31 T20Is** for New Zealand, scoring **2277 runs** with two hundred and **10 half-centuries** and **90 wickets**.
- **Jehan Daruvala** created history, as he became the first Indian to win a **Formula 2 race** at the **2020 Sakhir Grand Prix, Bahrain**. This was the final race of the F2 season. The Formula 2 Championship is a second-tier single-seater racing championship.
- **Sri Lanka** will host the **Asia Cup** in June 2021 while **Pakistan** has earned the rights to host the tournament in **2022**. As per the original schedule, the tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan in 2020, however, it got postponed due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- **Sergio Perez** (Mexico-Racing Point-BWT Mercedes), won the **2020 Sakhir Grand Prix** at the **Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain**. **Esteban Ocon** (Renault-France) secured the second position, followed by and **Lance Stroll** (Racing Point-BWT Mercedes-Canada) at third place.
- **Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju** has launched the **second edition** of **Fit India Cyclothon** through a virtual platform. The mega cycling event will run for 25 days, beginning from **7th December till 31st December 2020**.

### Current Affairs

- Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** has grabbed the **41st spot** in the 2020 list of **Forbes 100 most powerful women in the world**. This is the second time she features in the list, in 19 ranked at 34 and ranked 41st in 2020. India’s leading Businesswomen, **Kiran Mazumdar-shaw**, Chairman of Biocon Limited also featured in the list at 68th position.
- Indian actor, **Sonu Sood** has topped the first-of-its-kind ‘50 Asian Celebrities In The World’ 2020 list, published by UK based Eastern Eye newspaper.
- Indian singer **Armaan Malik** came in **fifth** for his immense musical output that included barrier-breaking English language songs. Sixth-placed **Priyanka Chopra Jonas** remains the most famous Indian star in the world, while the rest of the top 10 includes pan-Indian star **Prabhas** (7).
- American media personality and reality TV star, **Kylie Jenner** has been crowned the **highest-paid celebrity of 2020** by **Forbes**. The top-earning stars in the world earned a combined of **$6.1 billion in 2020** with Kylie Jenner. Ranked at number 2 on the list by making **$170 million** was American rapper and record producer **Kanye West**, who is also coincidentally **Kylie’s brother-in-law**. In addition to **Tyler Perry, Howard Stern, and Dwayne Johnson**, A-lister athletes like **Roger Federer, Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Neymar and LeBron James** helped round out the top 10.
- **HDFC Bank** is the top-ranked company among the **100 Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) companies in the country**, as per the **BFSI Movers and Shakers 2020 report** by Wizikey. **ICICI Bank** and **State Bank of India (SBI)** are ranked second and third, respectively. Other top 10 banks in 2020 Wizikey’s BFSI Movers and Shakers report are **Yes Bank, PNB, HSBC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bank of Baroda, Deutsche Bank, and IDBI**.
- The Union environment minister, **Prakash Javadekar** has released a report titled the ‘**Status of Leopard in India 2018**’. As per the report, the population of leopard in India has increased by 60 per cent in four years since 2014. **India** now has 12,852 leopards as per 2018 estimate, compared to the previous estimate of **7910 conducted in 2014**. The States of **Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra** recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783, and 1,690 respectively.
Swedish pole vaulter Mondo Duplantis and Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas are the 2020 Male and Female World Athletes of the Year. They are their countries’ first recipients of the prestigious athletics award announced during the virtual awards.

India’s wicketkeeper-batsman Parthiv Patel has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. The 35-year-old left-hander, who made his international debut in 2002, played 25 Tests, 38 ODIS and two T20Is for India.

Madagascar has replaced the Maldives as the host of the 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. The event had been awarded to the Maldives last year, but members of the Indian Ocean Island Games Federation voted to move the Games to Madagascar.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has registered ‘Breakdancing’ as the newest entry into Olympics and an official Olympic sport, with the aim to attract a new and younger audience. Breakdancing will be known as ‘Breaking’ in Olympics event. Breaking will make its Olympic Games debut at the 2024 Paris Games (2024 Summer Olympics).

Max Verstappen (Red Bull – Netherlands) won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix 2020, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. This was his second victory of the season and 10th victory of his career.

Indian Tennis player, Ankita Raina clinched her third doubles title of the season after she won the 2020 Al Habtoor Tennis Challenge jointly with her Georgian partner Ekaterine Gorgodze in Dubai.

The 2030 Asian Games were awarded to Doha, Qatar and the 2034 event went to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia after a deal was struck between the rival nations. Doha beat Riyadh for the 2030 Games in the vote at the Olympic Council of Asia’s (OCA) general assembly.

Pakistan’s star pacer, Mohammad Amir has announced his retirement from international cricket citing ‘mental torture’ by the management as the reason behind his decision.

The Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous Games to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021, which is scheduled to be held in Haryana. The four new games are, Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba.

Formula 1 world champion, Lewis Hamilton has won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2020. This is the second time that the 35-year-old Hamilton has been crowned Sports Personality of the Year. Prior to this, he won the award in 2014.

FIFA has cancelled men’s U-20 and U-17 World Cup tournaments in 2021 for the novel coronavirus. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of the FIFA Council has decided to cancel the 2021 editions of the men’s FIFA U-20 World Cup and FIFA U-17 World Cup, and to appoint Indonesia and Peru respectively, who were due to host the tournaments in 2021, as the hosts of the 2023 editions.

Former Indian captain and wicket-keeper batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been named as the captain of the ICC ODI Team of the Decade. Dhoni has also been named the skipper of the ICC T20I Team of the Decade. Similarly, Virat Kohli has been named the captain of the ICC Test Team of the Decade. Ravi Ashwin is the only other Indian in this list.

Indian wrestler, Anshu Malik has become the first wrestler of the country to finish on the podium position at the Individual Wrestling World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has imposed a 5-year ban on Russian shuttler Nikita Khakimov for charges of “betting, wagering and irregular match results. Khakimov was part of the Russian men’s team that won the bronze medal at the 2020 European Team Championships.

Summits And Conferences

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated and addressed the virtual edition of the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020 on 8th December 2020 through video conference. The objective of IMC 2020 is to align with the Prime Minister’s vision to promote ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’, ‘Digital Inclusivity’, and ‘Sustainable development, entrepreneurship & innovation’ and drive foreign and local investments, encourage R&D in the telecom and emerging technology sectors. The theme for IMC 2020 is “Inclusive Innovation – Smart, Secure, Sustainable”.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has decided to host its 2021 annual meeting in Singapore, which earlier was scheduled to take place in Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland from 13-16 May 2021. The decision to shift the annual forum from Switzerland has been taken in view of the Covid-19 situation in Europe.
The 5th India Water Impact Summit (IWIS) kicked off on 10th December 2020 virtually. The event was inaugurated by Ratan Lal Kataria, Minister of State for Jal Shakti. The objective of IWIS 2020 is Comprehensive Analysis and Holistic Management of Rivers and Water Bodies.

The 9th edition of Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. The four-day-long summit was organised by Indian Mountain Initiative (IMI) and hosted by Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhal (SDFU), Dehradun. The theme for 2020 SMDS was 'Emerging Pathways for Building a Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration'.

The Government of India and Bangladesh held a virtual summit to hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relationship, including further strengthening cooperation in the post-COVID-19 era. The meeting was led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina. The two leaders jointly inaugurated the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link, which would connect the borders of the two neighbouring countries.

The 20th edition of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting via video conferencing under the Chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The theme of the meeting was "Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean". The Indian delegation was led by V. Muraleedharan, MoS, Ministry of External Affairs. Sri Lanka has assumed the charge of Vice-Chair of IORA for the period 2021-23.

The 5th edition of the annual Global Technology Summit (GTS) was organised virtually by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India in collaboration with Carnegie India (CI). The theme of the 2020 GTS was "The Geopolitics of Technology".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed the sixth edition of the India-Japan SAMVAD conference 2020, via virtual conferencing. The purpose of this Samvad Conference is to discuss the need to build the future of Asia on the positive influence of traditions of non-violence and democracy in Asia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, jointly addressed the India-Vietnam Virtual Summit, via video conferencing. During the Summit, a 'Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People' document was adopted to guide the future development of the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The 12th GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment) Summit was held virtually. It was inaugurated by Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu virtually. The Summit provides a platform to deliberate on innovative technologies and solutions to help in creating robust mechanisms for developing sustainable and resilient solutions for the benefit of the entire community. The theme of the Summit was "Rejuvenating Resilient Habitats".

Awards & Recognition

Ranjitsinh Disale, a government teacher from Zilla Parishad Primary School, in Paritewadi village, Solapur district of Maharashtra, has won the 2020 Global Teacher Prize. He is the first Indian to win this award, which carries prize money of $1 million (Rs 7.4 crore).

The Indian-American young scientist and inventor, Gitanjali Rao, has been named as the first-ever ‘Kid of the Year’ by the iconic TIME magazine. This is the first time that the TIME magazine has launched the Kid of The Year” award.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has won the prestigious International King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award for 2020. The award was presented annually by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
Journalist-author, Raj Kamal Jha has won the 3rd Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for his novel, "The City and The Sea". Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the winner of the $5,000 prize was announced online in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Geneva-based United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has awarded the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award to Invest India, the National Investment Promotion Agency of India. The Invest India was declared the winner from among the 180 global Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs).

The year 2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians was awarded to Dr Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Her work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the ‘ASSOCHAM Foundation Week 2020’ via video conferencing. The week-long Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) Foundation Week was organised from 15 to 19 December 2020. The theme of the programme was ‘India’s resilience: Atmanirbhar roadmap towards $5 trillion economies.’ As a part of the celebration, PM Modi also presented the ‘ASSOCHAM Enterprise of the Century Award’ to Shri Ratan Tata, on behalf of the TATA Group, for his distinguished contributions to the country.

US President Donald Trump has presented America’s highest military decoration, ‘The Legion of Merit’, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The prestigious Legion of Merit was given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries.

Srinagar based Amar Singh College has been recognized with the ‘Award of Merit’ in the 2020 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The restoration of the Amar Singh College brought back one of the most prominent institutional buildings in Kashmir to its former glory.

The winners of the Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay New India Foundation Book Prize 2020 for the best non-fiction book on contemporary/ modern India were announced. The Prize was given jointly to Amit Ahuja for his Mobilizing the Marginalized: Ethnic Parties without Ethnic Movements (Oxford University Press) and to former Union minister Jairam Ramesh for his A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of VK Krishna Menon (Penguin Random House), a biography of politician and diplomat VK Krishna Menon.

Country's largest power producer, National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) has been conferred "Excellence" in the prestigious CII-ITC Sustainability Awards 2020 in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Domain. NTPC has been honoured in the Corporate Excellence Category, Commendation for Significant Achievement.

The Dr Narendra Dahlokkar Memorial Award for this year has been conferred upon Dravida Kuram president K. Veeramani. The award was instituted in the memory of the Maharashtra-based rationalist Dahlokkar.

Senior scientist Hemant Kumar Pandey has been honoured with DRDO's "Scientist of the Year Award" for his contribution in developing several herbal medicines, including the popular drug Lukoskin meant for the treatment of leucoderma.

The chairman & CEO of Railway Board, Vinod Kumar Yadav has been conferred with the prestigious “Eminent Engineer Award for the Year 2020’. This award is given by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) for his outstanding contribution towards modernization and reforms over Indian Railways.

In Madhya Pradesh, 96th Tansen Music Festival began in Gwalior with strict COVID-19 guidelines in place. In the inaugural ceremony renowned santoor player, Pandit Satish Vyas was conferred upon the prestigious Tansen Samman.

Harmony Foundation hosted the Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice. The Awards in its 16th year is the only award endorsed by Sister Prema, the Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity, the organization started by Mother Teresa. The theme for this year's awards was, 'Celebrating Compassion In Times Of Covid'. Awardees this year included Dr Anthony Fauci, Fr. Dr. Pradeep Kumar, Sanjay Pandey (IPS) KK Shailaja (Minister of Health Kerala), Vikas Khanna, Fr Fabio Stevenazzi etc.
Important Days

- The United Nation recognised **Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare** on 30th November every year since 2005.
- The **International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People** is an UN-organized day held every year on November 29. It is observed to mark the anniversary of resolution 181, wherein the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine on November 29, 1947.
- The 'National Organ Donation Day' is observed in India every year on 27 November, since past 10 years.
- Every year, on 1 December, the world commemorates **World AIDS Day**. This year the theme of World AIDS Day is "Global solidarity, shared responsibility".
- **International Day for the Abolition of Slavery** is observed annually on 2nd December since 1986 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- In India, the **National Pollution Control Day** is observed every year on December 2 to commemorate the life of people lost in the unfortunate incident of Bhopal Gas Tragedy that occurred in the year 1984 on the night of 2-3 December.
- The **World Computer Literacy Day** is observed annually on 2nd December to create awareness and drive digital literacy in underserved communities worldwide.
- The **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** is observed annually on December 3. The IDPWD day was proclaimed in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly. The 2020 theme: ‘Not all Disabilities are Visible’.
- **International Day of Banks** is observed globally on the 4th of December. On 19 December 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 74/245, which designated 4 December as the International Day of Banks.
- The **International Volunteer Day (IVD)**, also called **International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development** is observed on 5 December every year. IVD 2020 Theme: “Together We Can Through Volunteering”.
- The **World Soil Day** is celebrated every year on December 5 to raise awareness of the importance of soil quality for human well-being, food security and ecosystems. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) campaign "Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity" aims to raise awareness of the importance of sustaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being.
- The **International Civil Aviation Day** is celebrated every year on December 7 to recognize the importance of aviation to the social and economic development of the world. The Council has decided that from now until 2023, the theme will be: “Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development”.
- In India, the **Armed Forces Flag Day** (also known as the **Flag Day of India**) is observed annually on December 7 since 1949 as an honour to the soldiers, sailors and airmen of India who fought on the borders to keep the country safe.
- **International Anti-Corruption Day** is observed annually on 9 December to raise public awareness for anti-corruption. The theme of International Anti-Corruption Day 2020: ‘RECOVER with INTEGRITY.’
- The **International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime** is observed annually on December 9.
- The **Human Rights Day** is celebrated on 10 December annually across the world. This Day came into existence on December 10, 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. This year theme of Human Rights Day: Recover Better – Stand Up for Human Rights.
- Every year the **UNICEF Day** is observed on December 11. The United Nations General Assembly created UNICEF on December 11, 1946, as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children devastated due to World War II.
- The **International Mountain Day** is observed globally on December 11 every year. "Mountain biodiversity" is the theme of this year’s International Mountain Day, so let’s celebrate their rich biodiversity, as well as address the threats they face.
• **International Day of Neutrality** is a United Nations recognized day held on **December 12** each year to raise public awareness of the value of neutrality in international relations. It was officially declared by a UN General Assembly resolution adopted in February 2017 and first observed on **December 12, 2017**.

• **International Universal Health Coverage Day** is a United Nations’ recognized international day celebrated every year on **December 12**. This year's theme of International Universal Health Coverage Day is 'Health For All: PROTECT EVERYONE'.

• The **National Energy Conservation Day** is celebrated every year on **14 December** by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power.

• In India, **Vijay Diwas (also called Victory Day)** is celebrated every year on **December 16**. The country is celebrating the 49th Vijay Diwas in 2020. Vijay Diwas is observed to commemorate the service, valour, and sacrifices of the gallant men of the Indian Armed Forces' victory over Pakistan in 1971 war.

• The **International Migrants Day** is observed globally on **18 December** every year. In December 2000, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 18 December as International Migrants Day after considering the large and increasing number of migrants in the world.

• The theme of International Migrants Day 2020 is 'Reimagining Human Mobility'.

• **UN Arabic Language Day** is observed annually on December 18 every year. The day was established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2010 to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official languages throughout the Organization.

• **Goa Liberation Day** is observed on **19 December** every year in India and it marks the day Indian armed forces freed Goa in 1961 following 450 years of Portuguese rule.

• **International Human Solidarity Day** is observed globally on **20 December** every year to celebrate unity in diversity and raise awareness about the importance of solidarity.

• **India** observes the **National Mathematics Day** every year on **22 December since 2012**. The day is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. This year nation celebrates his 133rd birth anniversary of Ramanujan.

• **National Farmer's Day (Kisan Diwas)** is observed every year on **23 December** in India to remember the role of Indian farmers in the economy. The day is observed to mark the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister **Chaudhary Charan Singh**.

• **National Consumer Rights Day** is observed every year on **December 24**. On this day in 1986, the **Consumer Protection Act 1986** received the Presidential assent and thus came into force. The Act aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation, such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.

### Defence Current Affairs

• India successfully test-fired the anti-ship version of the **BrahMos supersonic cruise missile** from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory. The test was conducted as part of the ongoing trials being conducted by the Indian Navy. The DRDO-developed BrahMos supersonic cruise missile with a strike range of 300 Km was launched from **Indian Navy's INS Ranvijay** and it successfully hit its target ship near the **Car Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal**.

• The **Indian Navy** (IN) and the **Russian Federation Navy** (RuFN) are undertaking **Passage Exercise (PASSEX)** in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The exercise will help in enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between both the friendly navies. It involves advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, weapon firings, seamanship exercises and helicopter operations.

• **Himgiri**, which is the first of the three **Project 17A ships** being built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata was launched. The launch of 'Himgiri' has showcased GRSE's commitment towards the building of three state-of-the-art warships of **P17A for Indian Navy**.

• The **interceptor boat C-454**, built by Larsen and Toubro at its Hazira plant, will operate from Gujarat under the control of the Commander Coast Guard Region North-West of the **Indian Coast Guard**. It was commissioned by **Surat Police Commissioner Ajay Tomar**.
• Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) ‘Sujeet’, which is second in the series of 5 OPVs was commissioned at the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) in Vasco Town, Goa by Raj Kumar, Secretary (Defence Production).

• Ashraf Patel, the founder member and Board member of Pravah and ComMutiny – The Youth Collective (CYC) has been declared as the winner of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEOY) Award – India 2020. The award was presented by the Union Minister of Women & Child Development & Textiles, Smriti Zubin Irani.

• International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Office awarded Paul Sein Twaw Goldman Environmental Prize 2020 for Asia. This award is given to him for his efforts in promoting the self-determination of the Karen people in managing their natural resources.

• Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 in the Steel sector by the Institute of Directors.

• The Bayern Munich striker, Robert Lewandowski has been named The Best FIFA Men's Player 2020, beating off competition from last year’s winner Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. The 32-year-old Lewandowski, top scorer in Europe and winner of the Champions League with Bayern. Manchester City full-back, Lucy Bronze won the women’s best player award, becoming the first female English player to take the prize.

• Vidhyut Mohan was one of the "Young Champions of the Earth" winners by United Nations Environment Programme. A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.

• The chairman emeritus of the Tata group Ratan Tata, will be honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award. The award is given by the Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians.

• The Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh recently handed over three indigenously developed high technology systems to chiefs of the three armed forces: the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force. The three systems namely, Border Surveillance System (BOSS), Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System (IMMAS) and ASTRA Mk-I Missile, have been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

• Union Minister of Defence, Rajnath Singh has inaugurated the advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility of the DRDO in Hyderabad, Telangana. The state-of-the-art HWT Test facility has made India as the only third country in the world, after the US and Russia, to have such a huge facility in size and capability.

• The Indian Navy and Vietnamese Navy undertook the naval passage exercise PASSEX in the South China Sea. The two-day exercise was conducted as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries. The Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kiltan took part in the exercise.

• The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal to export indigenously-developed Akash Missile System. The Cabinet has also approved to set up of a committee for faster approvals of exports. The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces.

• Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) along with the Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of 'SAHAYAK-NG' India's first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container from IL 38SD aircraft (Indian Navy) off the coast of Goa.
Science and Technology

- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has partnered with Skylotech India (Skylo), a global machine connectivity solutions company, to launch satellite-based narrow band-Internet of things (NB-IoT). This initiative is the world’s first satellite-based NB-IoT network.

- The Bengaluru-based space-technology start-up “Pixxel”, has signed a pact with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to launch its first remote-sensing satellite on Isro’s workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket in early 2021. Earlier, the startup had planned to launch this satellite towards the end of 2020 and on a Russian Soyuz rocket. Pixxel aims to put a constellation of 30 earth observation micro-satellites into a sun-synchronous orbit by mid-2023.

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch a communication satellite CMS-01, formerly named GSAT-12R, on December 17, using its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket’s XL variant numbered as PSLV-C50. The CMS-01 will be a replacement for GSAT-12 that weighed 1,410 kg and was launched on July 11, 2011, with a mission life of eight years.

- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has set up a dedicated Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre named “NETRA”, at its ISTRAC campus at Peenya, Bengaluru. The ISRO SSA Control Centre ‘NETRA’ was formally inaugurated by ISRO Chairman K Sivan.

- NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) have selected Indian-American Raja Chari to be the Commander of the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station. Presently Raja Chari, is a colonel in the US Air Force. He will be the commander of SpaceX Crew-3 mission, while NASA’s Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA’s Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist. This mission is expected to be launched next year.

- USA’s plan to set up the first nuclear reactor on the moon by the end of 2026. In early 2021, the US Department of Energy in collaboration with NASA intends to solicit industry design proposals. It also got an impetus with a recent White House directive. The outgoing President Donald Trump, issued the “National Strategy for Space Nuclear Power and Propulsion” on 16 December.

- Indian Space startup, Skyroot Aerospace has successfully test-fired a solid propulsion rocket engine, named Kalam-5. With this, it has become the first private company of India to successfully design, develop and test a full solid-fueled rocket stage. This crucial propulsion technology will be used for their maiden rocket Vikram-1, which is under active manufacturing and is targeted to be launched in December 2021 with the help of ISRO.

- The Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan launched India’s first indigenously developed vaccine against pneumonia. The Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) named ‘Pneumosil’ has been developed by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH, an international, nonprofit global health organization based in Seattle.


Books & Authors

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has released a new book titled ‘Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific’. The book provides insight on how stronger regional cooperation strategies, including in health, trade, finance, and disaster risk, can help governments in Asia and the Pacific accelerate economic growth and robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Vice President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu has released the book titled “40 Years with Abdul Kalam- Untold Stories”, a book on the life of the former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. The book was authored by Dr A.Sivathanu Pillai. The book is published by Pentagon Press LLP and the foreword was written by Pranab Mukherjee, former president of India.

- The 2nd non-fiction book by author Amish Tripathi is titled “Dharma: Decoding the Epics for A Meaningful Life”. The book offers practical, philosophical lessons drawn from ancient Hindu epics. It is co-authored by his sister Bhavana Roy.
• Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has released a book on the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the Parliament attack on 13 December. He released the book 'The Shaurya Unbound' (English Version) and 'Samundar Samawe Boond Mein' (Hindi Version) was released on the 2001 incident. As many as 14 people including the five terrorists died during the incident.

• Maharashtra former Chief Minister and present leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Devendra Fadnavis has released the book ‘Ayodhya’ written by Madhav Bhandari. The book will serve as a key reference document summarising the protests held for the cause of a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

• VP Venkaiah Naidu virtually released the book ‘Oh Mizoram’, written by Governor of Mizoram, Shri P S Sreedharan Pillai. Pillai is a lawyer, an orator, a prolific writer, a philanthropist, and a thinker.


• Union Minister of State (I/C) for AYUSH and Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik released a Konkani book "Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anbav", by Dr Roopa Chari on 26 December, 2020. It is published by Sanjana Publications.

• The family of Late Justice Rajindar Sachar in association with The Indian Society of International Law and The Indian Law Institute is organizing the book launch "In Pursuit Of Justice: An Autobiography" written by Late Justice Rajindar Sachar. The book has been posthumously published.

A booklet titled ‘PM Modi and his Government's special relationship with Sikhs’ was released, on the occasion of birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It has been produced by Bureau of Outreach Communication under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and is released in three languages Hindi, Punjabi and English.

• Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer, AR Rahman has been roped in as ambassador of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India. In 2020, BAFTA will identify and support up to five exceptional talents working in film, games or television in India.

• Vice President Venkaiah Naidu has virtually released a commemorative Postage Stamp in honour of the late Prime Minister of India & Freedom Fighter, L K Gujral (Inder Kumar Gujral).

• Adar Poonawalla, the Chief Executive of the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), has been named among six "The Straits Times Asians of the Year" for 2020, by Singapore’s leading daily, The Straits Times, for their work in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

• The world's highest mountain peak 'Mount Everest' has become taller by 86 cm, as per a survey conducted jointly by Nepal and China. The Government of Nepal and China jointly conducted an exercise to measure the world’s highest peak. The new height of Mt Everest has been calculated at 8,848.86 metres, which is 0.86m more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954.

• The Ministry of Agriculture has declared Lakshadweep as India's first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic. All farming activity in the UT is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, which provides access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity.

• The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) along with Department of Posts (DoP) launched a digital payment application called ‘DakPay’ on 15 December 2020, in an effort to provide Digital Financial inclusion at the last mile across India. The app was launched by Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad.
• Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, with its standard working procedures, has acquired ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standards Certification from ASCB, UK. The Hyderabad Zoo has become the first zoo in the country to receive ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standards Certificate. This was presented to Telangana Forests Minister A. Indra Karan Reddy.

• The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has banned Mauritian badminton player Kate Jessica Foo Kune for two years for an anti-doping violation.

• Mega leather park to come up in Ramaipur village of Kanpur with an investment of Rs 5,850 crores. The park, part of the mega leather cluster project will create 50,000 direct jobs & indirect employment for 1.5 lakh people.

• NITI Aayog has launched indigenously developed India's first Digital Asset Management and Storage platform, called 'DigiBoxx'. The initiative will give a boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', as India now has its own cloud storage platform. Digiboxx offers free 20GB cloud storage space, and 100GB space per month at just Rs 30.

• Odisha Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik has announced that India's biggest hockey stadium is being set up in Rourkela city of Odisha. The stadium will be constructed in the Biju Patnaik University of Technology campus, Rourkela.

• India's first Lithium refinery is soon going to be set up in Gujarat. Manikaran Power Limited, one of the country's largest power trading and renewable energy company will invest around Rs 1,000 crore to set up this refinery. The refinery will process Lithium ore to produce battery-grade material. Lithium is a rare element and is usually not found in India.

• The Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Science & Technology, Dr Harsh Vardhan virtually inaugurated the web-based application “Digital Ocean”. It has been developed by Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) an autonomous organization under M/o Earth sciences. Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.

• The 21-year-old college student, Arya Rajendran has been elected the new mayor of Thrissurpanthanapuram Corporation, of Kerala. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, Arya is the youngest person in India to occupy the post of mayor anywhere in the country.

• Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has announced that a multi-modal logistics park in Assam. It will be constructed in Silchar and the Balacherra-Harengajao section of the Silchar-Saurashtra Highway will be completed in March 2022.

• Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the meteorological centre (MC) of the India Meteorological Department at Leh in Ladakh via video conferencing. The centre would provide localised weather forecasts in the region, which would result in strengthening the weather-related early warning system for the region. The meteorological centre at Leh is the second MC located in the Himalayas. The first such facility is based in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.

• Indian Railways successfully completed the 180 km per hour speed trial of its new design Vistadome tourist coaches. These Vistadome coaches will make train journeys memorable for the passengers, as well as give a further boost to tourism.

Obituaries

• British character actor David Prowse, best known for playing ‘Darth Vader’ in the original Star Wars trilogy, passed away.

• Senegal’s professional footballer, Papa Bouba Diop, who helped the country win the FIFA World Cup match in 2002, has passed away.

• The owner of MDH Masala, Dharampal Gulati passed away. He was born in 1923 in Sialkot, Pakistan. He was fondly called ‘dalaji’ and ‘Mahashayji’.

• American decathlete and film actor, Rafer Johnson, who was 1960 Olympic gold medalist in the decathlon, has passed away.
The former President of France, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, has passed away at the age of 94, from the complications of coronavirus. He had served as the third president of the Republic of France from 1974 to 1981.

The 15th Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zafarullah Khan Jamali, passed away. He served as PM from November 2002 to June 2004 for a duration of 1 Year, 7 Months, and 3 days.

Lakshadweep Administrator, Dineshwar Sharma, passed away. He was earlier headed the Intelligence Bureau and was also the Interlocutor for Jammu and Kashmir.

Veteran Bengali actor Manu Mukherjee, passed away. He started his film career with Mrinal Sen's Nil Akasher Niche (1958). The actor is best remembered for his roles in Satyajit Ray's Joy Baba Felunath and Ganashatru. He had also been part of children's fantasy film Patalghar.

Ravi Patwardhan, a popular face in Marathi entertainment industry, has passed away. The veteran actor became a household name for his role in Marathi TV series Agabai Sasubai.

Narinder Singh Kapany, also known as the father of fibre optics, passed away. The India-born American physicist was named as one of the seven "Unsung Heroes" by Fortune in their 'Businessmen of the Century' issue of November 1999.

Eminent Hindi writer, Madhukar Gangadhar, passed away. He was the lead storyteller of the new story movement. He was an associate of Renuji in Patna Akashvani, director of All India Radio in Allahabad & Deputy Director General at Delhi AIR.

Paolo Rossi of Italy, who scored 6 goals in the 1982 World Cup, passed away. He is the only male player in history to win the World Cup, the Golden Boot, the Golden Ball and Ballon d'Or in the same year. In 1982 was Italy's first victory after 1938.

Renowned Sanskrit scholar, Vidyavachaspati Bannanje Govindacharya, has passed away. He was well versed in Veda Bhashya, Upanishad Bhashya, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas and had written commentaries on Veda Suktas, Upanishads, Shata Rudriya, Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and Gita Bhashya.

US Air Force officer and test pilot Chuck Yeager, who in 1947 became the first pilot in history to have exceeded the speed of sound in level flight, has passed away. As a test pilot, on October 14, 1947, Yeager became the first human to officially break the sound barrier, when he flew the experimental Bell X-1 aircraft at Mach 1 (speed of sound) at an altitude of 45,000 ft (13,700 m). Level flight means flying at a constant altitude, not going up and down.

Ambrose Dlamini, the Prime Minister of Eswatini, a country in Southern Africa, has passed away after contracting coronavirus. He was appointed as the tenth prime minister of the country in October 2018.

Noted Indian wrestler, Sripati Khanchanale, who had won the prestigious 'Hind Kesari' title in 1959, passed away. In 1959, Khanchanale won the 'Hind Kesari' title by defeating wrestler Rustam-e-Punjab Battasingh at the New Railway Stadium in Delhi.

Eminent aerospace scientist and Padma Vibhushan awardee, Roddam Narasimha, has passed away. He had served at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc), where he taught Aerospace Engineering from 1962 to 1999. He also served as the director of the National Aerospace Laboratories from 1984 to 1993.

Former Australia Test all-rounder, Eric Freeman, has passed away. He made his Test debut against India at the Gabba (Brisbane Cricket Ground) in 1968 during which his opening scoring shot was a six, and he became the first player to achieve the feat.

Senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue, MG Vaidya, has passed away. He was a veteran journalist, a Sanskrit scholar and the first official spokesperson of the RSS. He became a member of the RSS in 1943.

Veteran Congress leader, Motilal Vora, has passed away following post-COVID-19 complications. He was born at Jodhpur in Rajasthan and began his career as a journalist. The late Congress leader served as the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh twice, once from 1985 to 1988 and then again in 1989 for 11 months.

Renowned poet and activist, Sugathakumari, passed away, after testing positive for the coronavirus. She was one of the most active campaigners of the Save Silent Valley Movement when it took shape in the 1970s.

Former English first-class batsman, John Edrich, has passed away. He was amongst the best players of his generation, during a career that ran from 1956 to 1978.
• Legendary Urdu poet and critic, **Shamsur Rahman Faruqi** has passed away, a month after recovering from **COVID-19**. He received Saraswati Samman in 1996 for his work ‘**She'r-e Shor-Angez**’, a four-volume study of the eighteenth-century poet **Mir Taqi Mir**. The Government of India awarded him the civilian honour of **Padma Shri in 2009**.

• Padma Shri awardee dance historian and critic, **Sunil Kothari** has passed away. The noted dance scholar Kothari received numerous titles and awards for his contribution to Indian dance forms. Some of them include the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1995)**; the **Padma Shri** bestowed by the Government of India (2001); and the Life Time Achievement Award of the Dance Critics Association, New York, USA (2011).

• Former professional wrestler **Jon Huber**, who was popularly known by his ring name ‘**Luke Harper**’ in the WWE has passed away, due to a non-COVID-19 related lung illness.

• Veteran broadcaster, **Indira Joseph Venniyoor** passed away. She was a renowned broadcaster, **All India Radio** veteran & first **English news announcer of Travancore Radio** when its English service began in 1949.

### Static Takeaways

- **NAFED** Founded: 2 October 1958.
- **NAFED Headquarters**: New Delhi.
- **Prime minister of New Zealand**: Jacinda Ardern.
- **Capital of New Zealand**: Wellington.
- **The currency of New Zealand**: New Zealand dollar.
- **ADB Headquarters**: Manila, Philippines.
- **YES Bank** Founded: 2004.
- **YES Bank Headquarters**: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **OECD Headquarters**: Paris, France.
- **OECD** Founded: 30 September 1961.
- **RBI Headquarters**: Mumbai; Founded: 1 April 1935, Kolkata.
- **IRDAI** Founded: 1999.
- **IRDAI Headquarters**: Hyderabad.
- **Headquarters of HDFC Bank**: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **The tagline of HDFC Bank**: We understand your world.
- **National Dairy Development Board Headquarters**: Anand, Gujarat.
- **Bata Headquarters**: Lausanne, Switzerland.
- **Bata Founded**: 24 August 1894.
- **BRO Headquarters**: New Delhi.
- **BRO Founded**: 7 May 1960.
- **National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organization Headquarters**: New Delhi.
- **United Nations Headquarters**: New York, United States.
- **United Nations Founded**: 24 October 1945.
- **Chief of Naval Staff**: Admiral Karambir Singh.
- **Indian Navy** Founded: 26 January 1950
- **BSF Director General**: Rakesh Asthana.
- **BSF Headquarters**: New Delhi.
- **Indian Oil Corporation Limited Headquarters**: New Delhi.
- **Indian Oil Corporation Limited Founded**: 30 June 1959.
- **Food and Agriculture Organisation Headquarters**: Rome, Italy.
- **Food and Agriculture Organisation Founded**: 16 October 1945.
- **(Japan)**.
- **International Union of Soil Sciences Founded**: 1924.
- **International Union of Soil Sciences Headquarters**: Vienna, Austria.
- **UNESCO headquarters**: Paris, France.
- **UNESCO Founded**: 16 November 1945.
- **TIME magazine Headquarters**: United States.
- **TIME magazine** First issue date: 3 March 1923.
- **Axis Bank** is 3rd largest private sector bank in India
- **Axis Bank Headquarters**: Mumbai, Maharashtra
- **Axis Bank Tagline**: Badht Ka naam Zindagi
- **Rupifi Co-Founder and CEO**: Anubhav Jain
- **Rupifi Headquarters**: Bengaluru(Bangalore), Karnataka
- **Rupifi Founded**: 2019.
- **Central Reserve Police Force Director-General**: AP Maheshwari.
- **Central Reserve Police Force Headquarters**: New Delhi, India.
- **China Capital**: Beijing.
- **China Currency**: Renminbi.
- **China President**: Xi Jinping.
- **Prime Minister of Bangladesh**: Sheikh Hasina; Capital: Dhaka; Currency: Taka.
- **Bhutan Capital**: Thimphu.
- **Bhutan Currency**: Bhutanese ngultrum.
- **Bhutan Prime Minister**: Lotay Tshering.
- **Kuwait Capital**: Kuwait City.
- **Kuwait Currency**: Dinar.
- **Romania Capital**: Bucharest.
- Romania Currency: Romanian leu.
- Romania President: Klaus Iohannis.
- NTPC Headquarters: New Delhi, India.
- International Labour Organization Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.
- International Labour Organization Founder: Paris Peace Conference.
- International Labour Organization Founded: 1919.
- PNB Headquarters: New Delhi.
- ICICI Bank Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ICICI Bank Tagline: Hum Hai Na, Khayal Apka.
- Bank Of Baroda Headquarters: Vadodara, Gujarat, India.
- Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs Parent Ministry: Ministry of Finance.
- Headquarters of WHO: Geneva, Switzerland.
- International Golf Federation Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Golf became an Olympic sport again in 2016 after 112 years.
- World Squash Federation Headquarters: Hastings, United Kingdom.
- Invest India Established: 2009.
- Invest India Headquarters: New Delhi.
- International Mathematical Union Headquarters location: Berlin, Germany.
- International Mathematical Union Parent organization: International Science Council.
- International Mathematical Union Founded: 1920.
- World Economic Forum Headquarters: Cologny, Switzerland.
- Forbes is the 103-year-old American Business Magazine, issued weekly.
- Editor in Chief- Steve Forbes.
- First issued in September 1917.
- Sports Authority of India Founder: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- Sports Authority of India Founded: 1982.
- Sports Authority of India Headquarters: Delhi.
- Madagascar Capital: Antananarivo.
- Madagascar President: Andry Rajoelina.
- Madagascar Currency: Malagasy ariary.
- International Olympic Committee Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland.
- International Olympic Committee Founded: 23 June 1894 (Paris, France).
- International Civil Aviation Organization Headquarter: Montreal, Canada.
- International Civil Aviation Organization Founded: 7 December 1944.
- UNICEF Executive Director: Henrietta H. Fore.
- AIR since 1957 as Akashvani; it was established in 1936.
- Adar Poonawalla joined the Serum Institute of India in 2001 and became the CEO of the company in 2011.
- ISRO Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Lakshadweep Island is the smallest Union Territory in India with 36 Islands. Includes- 12 atolls, 3 reefs, 5 submerged banks, 10 inhabited islands.
- Lakshadweep Capital: Kavaratti.
- Praful K Patel is currently the Administrator of Dadra Nagar and Haveli and Daman & Diu. He has taken charge of Lakshadweep Administrator from 05th Dec 2020.
- RBL Bank Ltd Incorporated: 1943, under the Indian Companies Act, 1913
- RBL Bank Ltd Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- RBL Bank Ltd Tagline: Apno Ka Bank.
- The bank's name was changed from 'The Ratnakar Bank Limited' to 'RBL Bank Limited' in August 2014.
- ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Ltd HeadOffice: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Chairperson of NITI Aayog: PM Narendra Modi.
- WADA Headquarters: Montreal, Canada.
- Capital of Uzbekistan: Tashkent; Currency: Uzbekistani Som.
- Austria Capital: Vienna.
- Austria Currency: Euro.
- Austria President: Alexander Van der Bellen.
- Norway Currency: Norwegian krone.
- Norway Capital: Oslo.
- Prime Minister of Norway: Erna Solberg.
- New Development Bank Headquarters location: Shanghai, China.
- New Development Bank Founder: BRICS.
- Headquarters of World Bank: Washington, D.C., United States.
- World Bank Founded: July 1944.
- Prime Minister of Bangladesh: Sheikh Hasina; Capital: Dhaka; Currency: Taka.
- RBI 25th Governor: Shaktikant Das; Headquarters: Mumbai; Founded: 1 April 1935, Kolkata.
- Syndicate Bank was amalgamated into Canara Bank on April 2020.
- Canara Bank Founded: July 1906 by Shri Ammembai Subba Rao Pai.
- Canara Bank Tagline: Together We Can.
- Canara Bank Headquarters: Bangalore, Karnataka.
- SBI Founded: 1 July 1955
- SBI Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Bombay Stock Exchange Established: 1875.
- Bombay Stock Exchange Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Kotak Mahindra Bank Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Kotak Mahindra Bank Tagline: Lets make money simple.
- Prasar Bharati Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union Headquarters: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union President: Ibrahim Eren.
- Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union Formation: 1 July 1964.
- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Director General of ICG: KrishnaswamyNatarajan
- Indian Coast Guard Headquarters: New Delhi.
- SAIL Headquarters: New Delhi.
- UNDP Headquarters: New York, New York, United States.
- Olympic Council of Asia Headquarters: Kuwait City, Kuwait.
- Eswatini Capitals: Mbabane, Lobamba; Currency: Swazi lilangeni.
- The administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration: Jim Bridenstine.
- Court of Arbitration for Sport HQ: Lausanne (Switzerland).
- Paytm HQ: Noida, Uttar Pradesh;
- World Bank Headquarters: Washington DC, United States.
- World Bank Founded: 1944.
- National Payments Corporation of India Headquarters: Mumbai.
- Central Bank of India Headquarters: Mumbai.
- Central Bank of India Founded: 21 December 1911.
- PMC Bank Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- CEO of Google: Sundar Pichai; Headquarters: California, United States.
- PayU Founded: 2006.
- Assocham Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Assocham Founded: 1920.
- Andaman and Nicobar Island (Lieutenant Governor): D K Joshi.
- NTPC Headquarters: New Delhi, India.
- European Boxing Confederation Headquarters: Assisi, Italy.
- National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Headquarters: Mumbai, India.
- FIFA Founded: 21 May 1904; FIFA Headquarters: Zürich, Switzerland.
- Headquarters of ICC: Dubai, United Arab Emirates.
- Prime Minister of Vietnam: Nguyen Xuan Phuc.
- Vietnam Currency: Vietnamese dong.
- Skyroot Aerospace Headquarters location: Hyderabad.
President of Myanmar: Win Myint.
Myanmar Capital: Naypyitaw.
Myanmar Currency: Kyat.
BADMINTON WORLD FEDERATION HEADQUARTERS: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
BADMINTON WORLD FEDERATION FOUNDED: 5 July 1934.
SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA HEADQUARTERS LOCATION: Pune.
HEADQUARTERS OF INCOIS: Pragathi Nagar, Hyderabad.
AU BANK HQ: Jaipur.
GOOGLE HEADQUARTERS: California, United States.
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF Ladakh: Radha Krishna Mathur.
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR VACCINES AND IMMUNISATION HEADQUARTERS LOCATION: Geneva, Switzerland.
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR VACCINES AND IMMUNISATION FOUNDED: January 2000.

### States and their Chief Ministers & Governors:

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<th>Governor</th>
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<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>YS Jagan Mohan Reddy</td>
<td>Biswa Bhusan Harichandan</td>
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<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
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<td>Assam</td>
<td>Sarbananda Sonowal</td>
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<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
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<td>Anusuiya Uikey</td>
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<td>Goa</td>
<td>Pramod Sawant</td>
<td>Bhagat Singh Koshyari</td>
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<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Vijaybhai R. Rupani</td>
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<td>Haryana</td>
<td>Manohar Lal</td>
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<td>Hemant Soren</td>
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<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>B. S. Yediyurappa</td>
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<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Pinarayi Vijayan</td>
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<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Shivraj Singh Chouhan</td>
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<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Uddhav Thackeray</td>
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<td>Manipur</td>
<td>N. Biren Singh</td>
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<td>Pu Zoramthanga</td>
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<td>R. N. Ravi</td>
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<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Naveen Patnaik</td>
<td>Ganeshi Lal</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>Capt. Amarinder Singh</td>
<td>V.P. Singh Badnore</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Ashok Gehlot</td>
<td>Kalraj Mishra</td>
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<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>PS Golay</td>
<td>Ganga Prasad</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami</td>
<td>Banwarilal Purohit</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Telangana</td>
<td>K Chandrasekhar Rao</td>
<td>Tamilisai Soundararajan</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Biplab Kumar Deb</td>
<td>Ramesh Bais</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>Trivendra Singh Rawat</td>
<td>Baby Rani Maurya</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>Mamata Banerjee</td>
<td>Jagdeep Dhankhar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. No.</td>
<td>Head of Organization</td>
<td>Name of Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chairman of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India</td>
<td>Bijender Singh</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>President of ADB</td>
<td>Masatsugu Asakawa</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>YES Bank MD &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Prashant Kumar</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>YES Bank Founder</td>
<td>Rana Kapoor</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Secretary-General</td>
<td>Jose Angel Gurria</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>RBI 25th Governor</td>
<td>Shaktikant Das</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>IRDAI Chairperson</td>
<td>Subhash Chandra Khuntia</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>MD and CEO of HDFC Bank</td>
<td>Sashidhar Jagdishan</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>BRO Founder</td>
<td>Jawaharlal Nehru</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>United Nations Secretary-general</td>
<td>António Guterres</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Indian Oil Corporation Limited Chairperson</td>
<td>Shrikant Madhav Vaidya</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation Head</td>
<td>Qu Dongyu</td>
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<td>International Union of Soil Sciences President</td>
<td>Takashi Kosaki</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>UNESCO Head</td>
<td>Audrey Azoulay</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>TIME magazine Editor</td>
<td>Edward Felsenthal</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Axis Bank MD and CEO</td>
<td>Amitabh Chaudhry</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Director of Indian Institute of Forest Management</td>
<td>Pankaj Srivastava</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>International Labour Organization Director-General</td>
<td>Guy Ryder</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>PNB CEO</td>
<td>S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>ICICI Bank MD &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Sandeep Bakhshi</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bank Of Baroda Chairman</td>
<td>Hasmukh Adhia</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Bank Of Baroda MD &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Sanjiv Chadha</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>MD of Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company</td>
<td>Nilesh Shah</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs Chairman</td>
<td>M. Ajit Kumar</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Director-general of WHO</td>
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<td>Invest India MD &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Deepak Bagla</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>Carlos Kenig</td>
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<td>Director-General of Sports Authority of India</td>
<td>Sandip Pradhan</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>International Olympic Committee President</td>
<td>Thomas Bach</td>
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<td>Salvatore Sciacchitano</td>
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<td>Serum Institute of India Founder</td>
<td>Cyrus Poonawalla</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>UNESCO World Heritage Centre Director</td>
<td>Mechthild Rossler</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>ISRO Chairman</td>
<td>K.Sivan</td>
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<td>Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited Chairman &amp; MD</td>
<td>Pravin Kumar Purwar</td>
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<td>RBL Bank Ltd MD and CEO</td>
<td>Vishwavingh Ahuja</td>
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<td>ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Ltd MD &amp; CEO</td>
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<td>Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog</td>
<td>Amitabh Kant</td>
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<td>President of World Anti-Doping Agency</td>
<td>Sir Craig Reedie</td>
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<td>New Development Bank President</td>
<td>Marcos Prado Troyjo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. No.</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>President of World Bank</td>
<td>David Malpass</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Canara Bank MD &amp; CEO</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>Chairman of State Bank of India</td>
<td>Dinesh Kumar Khara</td>
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<td>MD and CEO of Bombay Stock Exchange</td>
<td>Ashish Kumar Chauhan</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Director-General of International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
<td>Dr Bruno Oberle</td>
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<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature Founder</td>
<td>Julian Huxley</td>
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<td>Chairman of Steel Authority of India</td>
<td>Anil Kumar Chaudhary</td>
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<td>United Nations Development Programme Head</td>
<td>Achim Steiner</td>
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<td>Ahmed Al-Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah</td>
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<td>IntrCity RailYatri CEO</td>
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<td>John Coates</td>
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<td>Paytm Founder &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Vijay Shekhar Sharma</td>
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<td>AK Dixit</td>
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<td>Laurent le Moal</td>
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<td>European Boxing Confederation President</td>
<td>Franco Falcinelli</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd MD &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Sanjay Agrawal</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>National Investment and Infrastructure Fund MD and CEO</td>
<td>Sujoy Bose</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>President of FIFA</td>
<td>Gianni Infantino</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>Chairman of International Cricket Council</td>
<td>Greg Barclay</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>CEO of International Cricket Council</td>
<td>Manu Sawhney</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>Founder and CEO of Skyroot Aerospace</td>
<td>Pawan Kumar Chandana</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>Badminton World Federation President</td>
<td>Poul-Erik Hoyer Larsen</td>
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<td>Serum Institute of India CEO</td>
<td>Adar Poonawalla</td>
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<td>Cyrus S. Poonawalla</td>
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<td>Director of INCOIS</td>
<td>T. Srinivasa Kumar</td>
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<td>AU Bank MD &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Sanjay Agarwal</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>CEO of Google</td>
<td>Sundar Pichai</td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>DRDO Chairman</td>
<td>Dr G. Satheesh Reddy</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Director of IIT-Hyderabad</td>
<td>Budaraju Srinivasa Murty</td>
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**Union Ministers in News in month of December 2020**

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<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Union Minister</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Rural Development Panchayat Raj and Food Processing Industries</td>
<td>Narendra Singh Tomar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology</td>
<td>Ravi Shankar Prasad</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Ministry and Position</td>
<td>Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Union environment minister</td>
<td>Prakash Javadekar</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Union Minister for Tribal Affairs</td>
<td>Arjun Munda</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways</td>
<td>Nitin Gadkari</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Union Minister of State for Skill Development</td>
<td>Raj Kumar Singh</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister</td>
<td>Hardeep Singh Puri</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Union Minister of State for Home Affairs</td>
<td>G Kishan Reddy</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Union Petroleum &amp; Natural Gas Minister</td>
<td>Dharmendra Pradhan</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Union Home Minister</td>
<td>Amit Shah</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Union Finance Minister</td>
<td>Nirmala Sitharaman</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Union Sports Minister</td>
<td>Kiren Rijiju</td>
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<td>Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti</td>
<td>Ratan Lal Kataria</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Union Minister of Women &amp; Child Development &amp; Textiles</td>
<td>Smriti Zubin Irani</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Union Minister of Defence</td>
<td>Rajnath Singh</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Union Minister of Railways &amp; Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution</td>
<td>Piyush Goyal</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Power</td>
<td>Raj Kumar Singh</td>
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