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Polity and Governance

Centre's Stand on Central Vista Redevelopment Project

Why in News?

The Central Government has recently tried to justify its decision to construct a new Parliament building under the proposed '**Central Vista Redevelopment**' project, in the Supreme Court (SC).

About the project:

- Central Vista project **seeks to build a new parliament and other central government offices in Lutyens' zone** in central Delhi.
- The Parliament House was designed by **Lutyens and Baker**. The **Rashtrapati Bhavan** was designed by **Edwin Lutyens** and the **secretariat that includes both north and south block** was designed by **Herbert Baker**.
- The Centre is proposing to **redevelop the region by constructing a new Parliament house, a new residential complex**, which would house the Prime Minister and the Vice President besides several new office buildings including the North and South Block buildings. It will cover a **3-km stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate in Lutyens' Delhi**.
- The new complex is likely to have a triangular shape. The plan is to be **completed by 2022**.

Significance of the project:

- The present building, an 85-year-old structure suffers from **inadequacy of space** to house members and their staff and is thought to suffer from structural issues and the building also needs to be protected because of its heritage.
- Central Vista is an **essential ingredient of sovereignty and pride**, and also where recreational spaces are available for enjoyment by the citizens. It is a major attraction for the tourists who visit the country,

Criticism:

- In the '**re-development**' of the **Central Vista**, the **entire matter has been clothed in secrecy and opacity** and most important is the malevolent and malicious manner in which the Central Government decided in May 2015 to withdraw India's nomination to attain a World Heritage City tag for Delhi's Imperial Capital Cities from UNESCO.
- Several key approvals for the proposed Parliament building have been pushed during the lockdown which led to allegations of a lack of transparency.
- **Many opposition and environmentalists point out concerns** related to lack of studies to ascertain the need for the project and its impact on the environment, traffic and pollution.
- Various construction activities associated with the project were being cleared despite the fact that the case is pending before the Supreme Court.

Central Vista Redevelopment Project

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs proposed the **Central Vista redevelopment project in 2019**.

The project envisages:

- Constructing a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one.
- Constructing Common Central Secretariat.
- Revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath — from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.
- **North and South Block to be repurposed as museums.**
- Currently, the **Central Vista of New Delhi** houses **Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House, North and South Block, India Gate, National Archives** among others.

Academic credit banks, degree with entry and exit option

Why in News?

Changes to be brought about under the **first National Agricultural Education Policy**.

Key Points:

The policy is set to bring:

- Academic credit banks.
- Degree programmes with multiple entry and exit options to the **74 universities** focussed on **crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy training and research**.
- The new policy is drafted to **usher in some changes to the academic life of students of agricultural universities** in line with the National Education Policy.
- The Student READY (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) programme requires all students to undertake a **six-month internship**, usually in their fourth year, to gain hands-on training, rural awareness, industry experience, research expertise and entrepreneurship skills.

Challenges:

- A major challenge for agricultural universities could be the **push for multi-disciplinarity**.
- Another major challenge is to **ensure that experiential learning is made available to all students** if the multiple entry-exit system is implemented.

Online Dispute Resolution

Why in News?

The **pendency of over 40 million cases** in our judicial system remains a focal point for reform and reduction. This pendency makes a **strong case for online dispute resolution (ODR)**.

Reason behind such pending cases?

- Nearly a third of these cases have been pending for **3 to 30 years**. They are pending **due to resource-dwindling litigation, case adjudication and difficulty in consensus resolution**.
- There are barriers to conflict resolution for the common man, because of,
 - **Lack of access to courts** and representation, or

➤ **Entry-level barriers** such as linguistic or technology challenges.

- All of this is routinely brought up by those who are impacted by it.
- With the **pandemic disrupting basic services delivery**, the discussion is only going to expand in scope and volume.

What is the situation now?

- Around 40 million cases are pending cases at the Supreme Court, High Courts and the district courts.
- This seems more than significant, except that the courts are performing in an exemplary fashion to dispose of cases.
- Around 25 lakh cases were heard virtually by courts across the country in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- However, the key statistic is that the number of cases filed surpassed the disposal capacity.
- The pandemic has, of course, accelerated this trend.

Why ODR?

- Given the **escalating pendency**, it is important that **alternative methods for avoiding, containing and resolving disputes are adopted**.
- The access to justice isn't just about having the means to resolve disputes but also ensuring that the means are efficacious and expeditious.
- Keeping this context in mind, the growing focus on ODR in India is not without reason.

Significance of ODR?

- ODR aligns with the current socio-economic setting.
- It has a global precedent of being extremely successful, and above all, has principles of natural justice in its essence.
- The foundational pillars of any successful ODR regime are **trust, convenience and expertise**.
- India now has a long legacy of citizens trusting technology, whether in e-payments or in education and healthcare.
- To augment dispute resolution mechanisms, Lok Adalats and Gram Nyayalayas have been created as alternative options for affordable justice.
- ODR has significantly large-scale potential for innovation.

Mechanism of ODR

- A three-stage mechanism can increase the potential of ODR for **dispute avoidance, containment and resolution**.
- The mechanism should start with **online 'evaluation'**, where there is dispute diagnosis and exploration of options for litigants.
- Next, **online 'facilitation'** is resorted to, where facilitators and automated negotiation tools aid in non-adversarial resolution.
- Finally, if the first two stages don't result in a resolution, an online hearing is conducted, which is synonymous with online courts.

ODR's potential in India

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- ODR has the potential to raise equity, fairness, access in the dispute resolution ecosystem in India.
- The convenience brought by ODR has been exhibited by e-Lok Adalats conducted in several states, where disputes were resolved simply over WhatsApp audio/video calls.
- Supply-side capabilities could also be enhanced through a relatively large and competent services pool for adjudication and representation.
- ODR has the potential to be an effective alternative that utilises technology to bridge barriers and access in resolution.
- Through facilitating low cost, technology-augmented, linguistically- friendly and incentivised dispute avoidance, containment and resolution, ODR could enhance justice delivery to all.

‘Love Jihad’

Why in news?

Uttar Pradesh and **Haryana** have proposed to enact a law to curb ‘love jihad’.

About Proposal

- This proposal is a vicious **mix of patriarchy and communalism**. The idea was propounded by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister. It legitimises a term that constitutes **an obvious insult against inter-faith marriages and relationships in which one of the parties is a Muslim man**.
 - The reason for bringing in such a law is that the **Hindu women are under the threat from Muslim youth** seeking to win over girls for religious conversion in the name of marriage.

What are the flaws in the concept?

- There is no legal sanction to political terms such as ‘love jihad’.
- There can be no legislation based on an extra-legal concept.
- In any case, legislative intervention in marriages involving consenting adults will be clearly unconstitutional.

Current Laws

- **The domain of matrimony is occupied by separate laws governing weddings** that take place under religious traditions, and the Special Marriage Act that enables a secular marriage.
- Under the **Special Marriage Act**, secular marriage includes inter-faith marriages.

Motive behind such Proposal:

- Uttar Pradesh and Haryana Chief Ministers spoke about marriages as if they were not a matter of personal choice.
- **Investigation into marriages** that purportedly raised such a suspicion also failed to find any substance in the allegations.
- The immediate context for these leaders to curb inter-faith marriages is a recent Allahabad High Court judgment.

Previous courts judgments:

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- **The Allahabad High Court's judgment** frowned upon religious conversion solely for the purpose of marriage.
- It declined to intervene on a writ petition seeking police protection for a couple, noting that the bride had converted from Islam to Hinduism solely for the purpose of marriage.
- It had found such an expedient conversion unacceptable, citing a similar 2014 verdict.
- The 2014 verdict **questioned the bonafides of conversions** without change of heart or any conviction in the tenets of the new religion.

What does the court's ruling mean?

- Although the court strayed from the issue at hand, its objective was to underscore that **conversion should not become a device**.
- It is useful as a principle that inter-faith couples retain their religious beliefs separately and opt for marriage under the Special Marriage Act.
- But, this principle cannot be used to derogate from personal choice.
- Also, it should not be used to interfere in the individual freedom to forge matrimonial alliances.

Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill

Why in news?

The Union Government has finalised **National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill 2020** to replace the **Indian Nursing Council Act 1947**.

- At present, **there are different undergraduate nursing examinations conducted by different medical institutes**. This requires an aspirant to **keep track of these throughout the year**.

About the commission:

- The draft Bill replaces the Indian Nursing Council with a **new body called National Nursing and Midwifery Commission**.
- This body would have **representatives of the Centre and the states..**
- It would frame policies and regulate standards for the governance of nursing and midwifery education and institutions.
- It would **provide standards for nursing and midwifery faculty and clinical facility** in teaching institutions.
- It would provide **basic standards of education, physical and instructional facilities, training, research, maximum tuition fee payable** in respect of various categories.
- It would frame policies and codes to ensure observance of professional ethics in nursing and midwifery profession.
- Similar to the National Medical Commission, the proposed commission would have different boards to regulate **UG and PG education**.
- It will assess and rate different institutions offering courses.

Role of the Commission:

- It proposes a **common entrance test** for undergraduate nursing courses that would integrate the system.

- It also proposes a **National Exit test** for the final year of the nursing or midwifery course, to ensure uniform quality.
- Every nurse and midwife would have to **register with the state boards**.
- The Bill will likely vest in the board the power to **decide course structure, fee, etc.,**
- A national register would be **maintained to track all qualified and practising nursing professionals**.
- It proposes a **temporary licence for foreign nationals** who are qualified nurses and midwives to practice in India.

Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Programme

Why in news?

The government has decided to grant approval to Phase 2 and 3 of the DRIP (Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Programme).

- The DRIP Phase 1 was doing a stellar job according to its mandate of **providing dam safety since 2012**.
- So, a **third-party evaluation** recommended the initiation of new phases.

Project Cost:

The government has decided to grant the approval to the DRIP at a project cost of **Rs 10,211 crore**. Of the total budget, **Rs 7,000 crore** will come from external assistance -the **World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**. The balance will be borne by the concerned implementing agencies.

Key Highlights of the Scheme:

- It is a step in the direction of water security, resilience against hazards and emergency action planning of the dam infrastructure around India.
- A perfect balance between structural resilience and economic resilience of dams has been envisioned through the DRIP project.
- Dam disasters are seen as matters of national shame; they not only lead to human tragedy, but also devastate the ecology.
- Thus, it is important that India becomes a leader in dam safety, which the DRIP Phases 1 and 2 will certainly be achieving in the coming times.

Implementation Measures under New Policy:

- The DRIP will be implemented **over a period of 10 years in two phases**.
- These phases will have each of **six years, with two years overlapping from April 2021 to March 2031**.
- The upcoming phases will bolster its operational mandate of **dam safety like structural integrity, surveillance and maintenance, monitoring, etc.**
- In spirit, the DRIP is the **actualisation of the principles and guidelines laid down by the Dam Safety Bill, 2019**.
- The new phases of the DRIP have a vibrant mix of **federalism and atmanirbharta** weaved into it.

Dam Safety Significance:

- In terms of the number of dams in the world, India ranks third, after China and the US, with 5,745 such projects.
- While 973 dams, or 18% of the total number, are 50-100-year old, 2,992 (56%) are aged 25-50.

- The age of these dams is what makes a robust Dam Safety Policy an absolute necessity.

Mercy Petition

Why in news?

The Governor of Tamil Nadu (T.N.) has withheld the pardon application filed by prisoners convicted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, despite a resolution being passed by the Council of Ministers in favour of releasing all seven prisoners.

Supreme Court Past Judgements on Mercy Petition:

- In **Maru Ram v. Union of India (1981)** case, Supreme Court held that the pardoning power can be exercised by the Central and the State Governments, not by the President or Governor on their own & the advice of the appropriate Government binds the Head of the State.
- The Supreme Court, in the case of **Shatrughan Chouhan v. Union of India**, laid down the principle of “presumption of dehumanising effect of such delay”.
- i.e. The Supreme Court confirmed that the due **process is guaranteed under Article 21** was available to **each and every prisoner & it can commute the death sentence** when there is an inordinate delay to perform a constitutional function.

Constitutional functionaries and judicial scrutiny ?

- In case of **Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Hon'ble Speaker (2020)** said that failure on the part of the Speaker to decide the application seeking a disqualification goes against the very constitutional scheme of adjudication contemplated by the Tenth Schedule.
- The court issued a judicial direction to the **Speaker to decide the disqualification petitions within a period of four weeks.**
- The Court also said it will issue directions in aid of a constitutional authority to arrive at a prompt decision.
- The apex court also recalled its earlier judgment in **Rajendra Singh Rana v. Swami Prasad Maurya (2007)**.
- In case of **substantial delay at the hands of the Governor the immediate interference of the Supreme Court is necessary to make sure that words contained in Article 161 of the Constitution meaningful.**

Article 32

Why in the news?

Supreme Court in its recent judgment discourages the use of Article 32.

About Article 32?

- It deals with the ‘Right to Constitutional Remedies’, i.e. the right to move the Supreme Court for the enforcement of the rights conferred in Part III (Fundamental Rights) of constitution. It states that the Supreme Court “shall have power to issue directions or orders or writs, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by this Part”.
 - It includes writs of **habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari**, whichever may be appropriate.

- The right guaranteed by this Article “**shall not be suspended except as otherwise provided for by this Constitution** (during the period of Emergency)”.
- An individual can approach the **High Court under Article 226 or the Supreme Court directly under Article 32.**

Why should the use of Article 32 should be discouraged?

- There are **large numbers of Petitions under Article 32** coming to Supreme Court.
- SC feels that **high courts, under Article 226, are well-equipped to deal with such matters.**
- In civil or criminal matters, the **first remedy available to an aggrieved person is that of trial courts**, followed by an appeal in the High Court and then the Supreme Court.
- When it comes to violation of fundamental rights, an individual can approach the High Court under Article 226 or the Supreme Court directly under Article 32. **Article 226, however, is not a fundamental right like Article 32.**

S.C. interpretation of Article 32:

- The Supreme Court has been **inconsistent with its position regarding Article 32.**
- **Journalist Siddique Kappan Case** - The court asked why the petitioners could not go to the High Court and waits responses from the Centre and the UP government.
- **Nagpur-based man defamatory case** - The same Bench directed him to approach the High Court first.
- **Poet Varavara Rao Case** - In a relief petition under Article 32, the Supreme Court directed the Bombay High Court to expedite the hearing on a bail plea filed on medical grounds.
- Here, it also observed that once a competent court had taken cognisance, it was under the authority of that court to decide on the matter.
- **Arnab Goswami Case** - The court had then said that the right to approach the Supreme Court under Article 32 is itself a fundamental right.
- **It also observed that** “there is no doubt that if a citizen of India is deterred in any case from approaching this Court in exercise of his right under Article 32, it would amount to a serious and direct interference in the administration of justice in the country”.
- **Romesh Thappar vs State Of Madras Case (1950)** - Supreme Court observed that it is the protector and guarantor of fundamental rights, and it cannot refuse to entertain applications seeking protection against infringements of such rights.
- **Jabalpur vs S S Shukla (1976)** - Supreme Court had said that the citizen loses his right to approach the court under Article 32.
- Constitutional experts say that it is eventually at **the discretion of the Supreme Court and each individual judge to decide whether an intervention is warranted in a case**, which could also be heard by the High Court first.

Similarities & differences Article 32 and Article 226

- Both Article 32 and 226 is invoked for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights
 - Both the Supreme court and High court has the power to issue writs under Article 32 and Article 226 respectively.
 - **Article 32** is invoked for the enforcement of fundamental Rights whereas Article 226 is invoked for enforcement of fundamental right as well as other legal rights too.
 - The power to High court **under Article 226** is wide than the power of the Supreme court under Article 32
 - Power to issue writs under Article 32 is mandatory for the Supreme court whereas High court has discretionary power to issue writs under Article 226
-
- **Habeas corpus** - (related to personal liberty in cases of illegal detentions and wrongful arrests)
 - **Mandamus** - directing public officials, governments, courts to perform a statutory duty;
 - **Quo warrant** - to show by what warrant is a person holding public office;
 - **Prohibition** - directing judicial or quasi-judicial authorities to stop proceedings which it has no jurisdiction for; and
 - **Certiorari** - re-examination of an order given by judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative authorities.

Regulating Online Content

Why in news?

The government will bring **video streaming services and online news under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.**

- **It clubs the only sector of the media which has pre-censorship**, namely films, with the news media which wasn't subjected to pre-censorship.
- This decision **may constrain the free press.**

Why did the government take this decision?

- Recently, the Supreme Court asked the government for suggestions toward improving the existing self-regulatory mechanism for TV media.
- The government responded stating that regulating the digital media was more pressing.
- More regulation is usually a problematic idea, bringing with it the real risk of censorship.

What is the merit?

- This decision may bring in a **level playing field** by bringing new digital players within the purview of regulation along with the non-digital ones.
- New movies, before theatrical release, have to get through the certification process of the Central Board of Film Certification.
- In contrast, video streaming services like Netflix, which have gathered several Indian subscribers, have not had to follow any such requirement.

- It cannot be denied that regulation, of the light-touch kind, which serves as an advisory for the content being presented to the viewers, is useful.

Concerns:

- There is a question of whether the intent is just to create a level playing field, and nothing more.
- There are concerns about the functioning of the regulatory mechanisms.
- The fear is that this will just end up facilitating more governmental interference and problematic censorship in regulating digital news.

What is needed?

- **Indian democracy's progress is dependent on free speech.**
- So, it is important that **regulation is not an excuse to stifle voices.**
- The government should recognise that there is really no reason to have a different regulatory mechanism for digital news.
- For decades now, **the print media and television media have managed themselves in self-regulation frameworks.**
- In these frameworks, one of their main goals has been to maintain their independence.
- **Self-regulation is a must**, and censorship is not needed.

Inflammatory Journalism

Why in news?

Supreme Court has questioned the central government on its measures to curb the **communally slanted television coverage.**

Key Highlights:

- There was **communal colour (hate against Muslims) given by some TV channels to the incident of large clusters of COVID-19 infections** among those who attended a Tablighi Jamaat event in New Delhi.
- So the Supreme Court's is keen to know **what action has the government taken under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act** against offending broadcasters.
- The Court also warned that if the government fails to explain its mechanism to deal with the problem, it would create one on its own.

Government Stand:

- It stated that media coverage struck a balanced and neutral perspective.
- It is committed to media freedom.

Supreme Court's rationale:

- SC is **unconvinced with the present mechanism of self-regulation under the National Broadcasting Standards Authority.**

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- The government is empowered under the Act to prohibit transmission of programmes that violate the **programme or advertising codes (Section 19)** and even an **entire channel, in public interest (Section 20)**.
- Though the violations of norms are common but there is a class of violation of norms in broadcasting that needs to be curbed.
- In the past, channels have been **asked by the I&B Ministry to take some programmes off the air**.
- In the Sudarshan News case, which began a series that propagated hate against Muslims.
- The government has merely administered a '**caution**' to the channel and asked it to moderate the content of future episodes and avoid breaching the Programme Code.
- Later the court ordered the **suspension of further episodes & it distinguished between free speech and hate speech**.

Forest Rights Act in J&K

Why in news?

J&K government decision to implement the Forest Rights Act is a cause of concern.

About Forest Rights (FRA) Act:

- It provides **Adivasis access and ownership rights, forest-based livelihood rights, and minor forest produce rights**.
- Under this act the forest rights committees will assess the nature and extent of rights being claimed at the village-level.
- Subsequently, these claims would be scrutinised by the sub-divisional committees which will then prepare a record of forest rights.
- District-Level Committees will give the final approval and grant forest rights.

Why the act is now a concern?

- **On October 31, the J&K government's decided to declare State Land (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001, also known as the Roshni Act, null and void.**
- This Act was struck **down due to the questionable transfer of ownership of state land to many influential people, including Ministers, legislators, bureaucrats, and police officers.**
- But some say that it **provided ownership rights to many poor, landless Adivasis & now the land will be retrieved from them.**
- In case of J&K, **there is no cut-off date mentioned in the FRA unlike rest of India**, where the act provides recognition of forest rights to forest dwellers who had occupied forest land before December 13, 2005.
- **Without a cut-off date & declaring the Roshni Act null and void, will lead to forceful evictions & tribal families will not benefit from the implementation of the FRA.**
- In the last few weeks, there was intensified eviction and demolition drives against nomads without any rehabilitation plans in place.
- Moreover Adivasis largely depend on non-tribal leadership to represent their issues and demands as they lack of political reservation leading to further marginalisation.

Vaccine Nationalism

What is the issue?

The COVID-19 pandemic is a human tragedy and needs **global solidarity, especially when it comes to offering vaccines to all**. In this regard, the **WTO** has a role in getting pharma firms and countries to treat vaccines and life-saving medicines as a **public good**.

What all should an emergency response entail?

- There is (and should be) empathy and **concern about human suffering**.
- Such solidarity is a recognition of the need to:
 - prevent further damage and destruction
 - rescue and evacuate affected people to safer zones, and salvage belongings
 - meet their minimal survival needs
- Nobody is charged for this. Instead, it is considered as relief work which comes out profusely as charity; a humane gesture.
- On the contrary, **it is illegal to hoard, for black marketing, essential goods in affected areas**.
- Overcharging of commodities and services during any natural disaster is always a scandal.
- **It is a crime against humanity to make a profit during any human tragedy**.

What is the case with the COVID-19 pandemic in this context?

- The COVID-19 pandemic is also a human tragedy.
- It needs global solidarity, and definitely not a time to be doing business and being conscious of making profit.
- But the international trade market is working otherwise.
- In a liberalised economy, there is a shocking silence in the global market trying to do business out of human suffering.
- When economies crumbled in many countries, e-commerce and gadget-based gaming business boomed.
- Also, there are numerous examples of companies having made enormous profits in the supply of personal protective equipment and kits and ventilators.
- Business lies in selling technologies around COVID-19, the diagnostics, drugs and vaccine candidates.

What is the challenge with vaccine access?

- The **entire global population**, estimated to be nearly 8 billion people, is in need of a vaccine (still being tested and yet to be approved) for COVID-19.
- So the production at full capacity and supply to every country will take time.
- The world community cannot allow the rich and the strong to grab everything first.
 - **The advance purchase agreements** that some countries have negotiated with pharmaceutical companies exemplify such adverse trends.
 - **Such vaccine nationalism undermines equitable access to vaccines**.
- So, **organisations of the United Nations and global networks for people should coordinate**.
- **The World Health Assembly**, in May 2020, set up mechanisms to counter the obstacles to equitable access to COVID-19 technologies such as vaccines, diagnostics, medicines, PPE kits and machines.
- There has to be prioritisation for high-risk groups in all countries, especially in the least developed, low- and middle-income nations.

- That framework has to be accepted by the global community without dispute.
- **The COVAX partnership is a mechanism for ensuring that.**
- **GAVI, or the Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative**, was in existence during the pre-COVID-19 period.
 - This was meant to ensure the pooled procurement and equitable supply of life-saving vaccines to low- and middle-income countries.
 - It has been roped in for the COVID-19 vaccine too.

What role should the governments play?

- The World Health Organization Director General Dr. Tedros exhorted member countries to treat COVID-19 technologies as a **“public good”**.
 - **A public good is a common property** of the nation and such goods are not excludable or there should not be any rivalries in dealing with it.
- But pharmaceutical companies were far from this ideal.
- If it is a public good, **governments must step in to regulate its development, innovation, manufacture, sale, and supply ultimately to the public.**
- If there is public financing for technology development, there is no scope for grant of patent protection.
- A public good cannot be submitted to the vagaries of market fluctuations of pricing dependent on demand-supply dynamics.
- Governments should be the custodian of public goods.
- It is a basic human right to avail accessible and affordable health care.
- If such an idealistic outcome does not materialize based on basic human rights, then some regulation mandated by the UN General Assembly must be thought of.

What are the WTO provisions in this regard?

- The WTO had raised concern over public health with regard to the non-availability of patented drugs in sufficient quantity, and at affordable prices.
- The WTO had made provisions for **compulsory licensing through** –
 - the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property,
 - the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)
 - the Doha Ministerial Conference declaration 2001
- With these in place, the government intervenes when patent clauses regarding availability, reasonable pricing, local production and technology transfer are not met by the patent holder.

What are the options before India for vaccine availability?

- **Compulsory licensing is an “involuntary contract”** issued by the national government between a “willing buyer” or local manufacturer and an “unwilling seller” or patent holder foreign company.
 - India utilised this provision for the first time on March 9, 2012.
 - It was used to grant license to Natco Pharma Hyderabad against the will of patent owner Bayer, Germany.
 - This was to manufacture Sorafenib tosylate, a life-saving anti-cancer drug for kidney and liver tumours, with 97% cost reduction.
 - It is sold by Bayer under the brand name, Nexavar.

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- This is an extreme step available with India 'if rich countries go for advance purchase and hoarding of a COVID-19 vaccine produced in India by multinational pharma companies and deny India's supply needs'.
- But COVID-19 vaccine candidates are still in trial phase; regulatory approval and patent are still awaited.
- So, failure to comply with patent regulations as a reason for the issue of compulsory licence cannot be applied.
- **Coercion to issue** "voluntary licensing" to subsidiary companies in many developing countries such as India, Egypt, Thailand and Brazil by the patent holder is another option.
- **Waiver** - India and South Africa jointly sent out a communication, on October 2, 2020 to the IPR Council of the WTO.
- It asked for a waiver of the protection of copyright, design, trademarks and patent on COVID-19 related technologies including vaccines.
- If this is decided favourably as a special case considering the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, it will set a precedent.

What is the way forward?

- **A UN organisation such as the WTO can wield influence on member-nations** to forgo trade profits for a humanitarian cause.
- Global campaigns through the media and civil society organisations can garner enough momentum to exert pressure on TRIPS.
- Despite these, vaccines and life-saving medicines being treated as a public good must definitely be the long-term goal.

Farm Reform Laws

Why in news?

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have been marching toward Delhi in protest against the three central farm legislations.

What are the three recent farm reforms Acts?

The three recent Acts on agriculture reforms are:

- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020
- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020
- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020
- The Bills were introduced in the Parliament in September 2020 to replace the ordinances issued during the lockdown.

Key provisions of the legislations

Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020:

Need:

- Farmers in India suffered from **various restrictions in marketing their produce**.

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- There were restrictions for farmers in selling agri-produce outside the notified APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) market yards.
- The farmers were also restricted to sell the produce **only to registered licensees of the State Governments**.
- Further, barriers existed in free flow of agriculture produce between various States owing to the prevalence of various APMC legislations enacted by the State Governments.

Provisions:

- It seeks to provide for the creation of an ecosystem where the **farmers and traders have the choice relating to sale and purchase of farmers' produce**.
- This facilitates remunerative prices through **competitive alternative trading channels**.
- It thus promotes efficient, transparent and barrier-free inter-State and intra-State trade and commerce of farmers' produce.
- The produce will have a reach outside the physical premises of markets or deemed markets notified under various State agricultural produce market legislations.
- It will also provide a **facilitative framework for electronic trading**.
- It will also help farmers of regions with surplus produce to get better prices and consumers of regions with shortages, lower prices.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020

Need:

- Indian agriculture is characterized by **fragmentation due to small holding sizes**.
- It has certain weaknesses such as **weather dependence, production uncertainties and market unpredictability**.
- This makes agriculture risky and inefficient in respect of both input and output management.
- In this context, this legislation will transfer the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor.

Provisions:

- This seeks to provide for a **national framework on farming agreements**.
- It thus seeks to protect and empower farmers to engage with agri-business firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters or large retailers.
- They can take up farm services and sale of future farming produce at a mutually agreed remunerative price framework.
- It will also enable the farmer to access modern technology and better inputs.
- It will reduce the cost of marketing and improve income of farmers.
- **Farmers will engage in direct marketing thereby eliminating intermediaries** resulting in full realization of price.
- Effective dispute resolution mechanism has been provided for with clear time lines for redressal.

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020

- The Act seeks to **remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities**.
- This will remove fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations.
- The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to harnessing of economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into agriculture sector.

Rationale

- India has become **surplus in most agri-commodities**.
- But farmers have been **unable to get better prices due to lack of investment in cold storage, warehouses, processing and export**.
- This is because the **entrepreneurial spirit gets dampened due to Essential Commodities Act**.
- Farmers suffer huge losses when there are bumper harvests, especially of perishable commodities.
- In this context, the legislation will help drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of food supply chain.
- It will help both farmers and consumers while bringing in price stability.
- It will create **competitive market environment** and also **prevent wastage of agri-produce that happens due to lack of storage facilities**.

Economics

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme

Why in News?

The Union Government has **extended the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)** by one month till 30th November, 2020, or till such time that an amount of Rs. 3 lakh crore is sanctioned under the Scheme, whichever is earlier.

- The scheme was launched as part of the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package announced in May 2020** to mitigate the distress caused by **coronavirus induced lockdown**, by providing credit to different sectors, especially **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.

About Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme

- Under the Scheme, **100% guarantee coverage to be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC)** for **additional funding of up to Rs. 3 lakh crore to eligible MSMEs and interested MUDRA borrowers**.
- The credit will be provided in the form of a **Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility**.
- The Scheme would be applicable to all loans sanctioned under GECL Facility during the period from the date of announcement of the Scheme to **31.10.2020**.

Aims and objectives

- The Scheme aims at **mitigating the economic distress faced by MSMEs** by providing them additional funding in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line.
- The main objective is to **provide an incentive to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs)**, i.e., Banks, Financial Institutions (FIs) and NBFCs to increase access to, and enable the availability of additional funding facility to MSME borrowers.
- It aims to provide a **100 per cent guarantee for any losses suffered by them due to non-repayment of the GECL funding by borrowers**.

Salient features

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- The entire funding provided under GECL shall be provided with a **100% credit guarantee by NCGTC to MLIs** under ECLGS.
- Tenor of the loan under Scheme shall be **four years with a moratorium period of one year on the principal amount.**
- **No Guarantee Fee shall be charged by NCGTC from the Member Lending Institutions (MLIs)** under the Scheme.
- Interest rates under the Scheme shall be capped at **9.25% for banks and FIs, and at 14% for NBFCs.**

Benefits of the scheme

- The scheme aims to mitigate the distress caused by COVID-19 and the consequent lockdown, which has severely impacted manufacturing and other activities in the MSME sector.
- The scheme is expected to **provide credit to the sector at a low cost, thereby enabling MSMEs to meet their operational liabilities and restart their businesses.**
- By supporting MSMEs to continue functioning during the current unprecedented situation, the Scheme is also expected to have a positive impact on the economy and support its revival.

National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd

NCGTC is a **private limited company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 in 2014**, established by the **Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance**, as a **wholly owned company of the Government of India**, to act as a **common trustee company for multiple credit guarantee funds.**

- Credit guarantee programmes are designed to **share the lending risk of the lenders** and in turn, facilitate access to finance for the prospective borrowers.

PM SVANidhi

Why in news?

The **Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi)** scheme was launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.**

About the scheme:

- Through the PM SVANidhi scheme, the central government would extend **Rs 10,000** loan as working capital to street vendors. This amount will help the street vendors to **restart their businesses which have been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.**
 - **The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** is the scheme's implementation agency.

Significance of the scheme

- This scheme will help in mainstreaming and legitimising genuine street vendors who have not got valid identity cards.
- The scheme brings in financial mainstreaming of street vendors through loans and digital payments.

RCEP Trade Deal

Why in news?

Recently, the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** was signed into existence by **15 countries** led by **China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand** and the **10-state ASEAN grouping**, creating one of the world's largest trading blocs.

India had been a part of negotiations for almost nine years till it pulled out in November 2019, stating that **inadequate safeguards and lowering of customs duties** will adversely impact its manufacturing, agriculture and dairy sectors.

However, by staying out, **India has blocked itself from a trade bloc that represents 30%** of the global economy and world population, touching over 2.2 billion people.

Further, as the **summary of the final agreement shows that the pact does cover and attempt to address some issues that India had flagged, including rules of origin, trade in services, movement of persons**. Therefore, this makes the case of India to review its decision and look RCEP through the lens of economic realism.

About RCEP?

- RCEP deal is the largest regional trading agreement to this day.
- The purpose of RCEP was to make it easier for products and services of each of these countries to be available across this region.
- Negotiations to chart out this deal had been on since 2013.
- It is signed by 15 countries led by China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10-state ASEAN grouping.
- [ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations]
- India decided to exit the grouping in 2019.

Why did India exit the grouping?

Reasons for India's Withdrawal

- **Unfavorable Balance of Trade:** Though trade has increased the post-Free Trade Agreement with South Korea, ASEAN countries and Japan, imports have risen faster than exports from India.
 - According to a paper published by NITI Aayog, **India has a bilateral trade deficit with most of the member countries of RCEP.**
- **Chinese Angle:** India has already signed FTA with all the countries of RCEP except China. Trade data suggests that India's deficit with China, with which it does not have a trade pact, is higher than that of the remaining RCEP constituents put together.
 - This trade deficit is the primary concern for India, as after signing RCEP cheaper products from China would have flooded the Indian market.
 - Further, from a geopolitical perspective, RCEP is China-led or is intended to expand China's influence in Asia.
- **Non-acceptance of Auto-trigger Mechanism:** To deal with the imminent rise in imports, India had been seeking an auto-trigger mechanism.
 - Auto-trigger Mechanism would have allowed India to raise tariffs on products in instances where imports cross a certain threshold.
 - However, other countries in the RCEP were against this proposal.

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- **Protection of Domestic Industry:** India had also reportedly expressed apprehensions on lowering and eliminating tariffs on several products like dairy, steel etc.
 - For instance, the dairy industry is expected to face stiff competition from Australia and New Zealand.
 - Currently, India's average bound tariff for dairy products is on average 35%.
 - The RCEP binds countries to reduce that current level of tariffs to zero within the next 15 years.
- **Lack of Consensus on Rules of Origin:** India was concerned about a "possible circumvention" of rules of origin.
 - Rules of origin are the criteria used to determine the national source of a product.
 - Current provisions in the deal reportedly do not prevent countries from routing, through other countries, products on which India would maintain higher tariffs.

How far is China's presence a factor?

- Escalating tensions with China are a major reason for India's decision.
- The various measures India has taken to reduce its exposure to China would have sat uncomfortably with its commitments under RCEP.
- Major issues that were unresolved during RCEP negotiations were related to the exposure that India would have to China.

India's options now:

- India is an original negotiating participant of RCEP.
- It has the option of joining the agreement without having to wait 18 months as stipulated for new members in the terms of the pact.
- Alternatively, India may be reviewing its existing bilateral FTAs with some of these RCEP members.
- It will also make newer agreements with other markets with potential for Indian exports.
- Over 20 negotiations, including with the US and the UK, are underway.

New Model of Urban development

Why in news?

At the **Bloomberg New Economy Forum**, PM called for reimagining of urban planning and development to make cities healthy and livable after COVID-19.

Need of new urban planning:

- The fragile infrastructure in urban areas aided the virus spread quickly in cities.
- In the first hundred days of the pandemic, the top 10 cities affected by virus worldwide accounted for 15% of the total COVID cases.
- There was Rapid transmission in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai due to densification and inability to practice distancing norms.
- Whereas in Dharavi, which is one of the world's highest slum densities, experienced low viral impact due to screening and herd immunity.

What should be the new urban planning based on?

- **Good, affordable housing** is the necessary for a sustainable and healthy city.

- Unlike speculative housing investments, well-designed rental housing is key to protecting migrant labour and other less affluent sections from virus spread.
- Mumbai is estimated to have added only 5% of rental housing in new residential construction (1961-2000), and that too led by private funding.
- **The Centre's Affordable Rental Housing Complexes scheme** should focus on building new houses on the lines of the post-war reconstruction in Europe, Japan and South Korea by coordinating with states.
- The laws on **air pollution, municipal solid waste management and water quality** should be strictly enforced to make urban mobility comfortable.
- Cholera, plague and global flu pandemic a century ago led to change in sewerage, waste handling, social housing and health care which helped in controlling the disease.

Power Pricing Reforms

Why in news?

The next set of power reforms is **centring around amending the Electricity Act and/or the Tariff Policy proposed rather than the addressing of structural issues in power supply.**

Structural issues in Power sector:

- There is **surplus generating capacity-by March 2020, the installed capacity was 370.05 GW**, but the **electricity demand has never gone above 183 GW**.
- Hence, states with more than 30-40% of installed capacity either backed down or shut down leading to 15-35% of total fixed cost to unscheduled electricity.
- Aggressive energy efficiency drive (**UJALA programme**) will reduce the power bill of consumers, but power demand decreases and adds to the fixed costs that utilities pay.
- **Increasing renewables** without retiring old and polluting coal-fired generators, long tenure of power procurement agreements, excess tied capacity are other such issues.

Concern with New Tariff Policy:

- It aims to keep **tariffs for all categories of consumers** within the maximum range of 20% below or above the average cost of supply.
- **An analysis by IEA finds that** residential tariff on PPP basis in India is higher compared to Russia, China, the US, Indonesia, Canada, Korea, etc.
- Hence **tariff hike on electricity will impact the household finance** as cross-subsidies cannot be avoided at this time (creates price inflation especially in rural areas) .
- States which are moving towards **non-remunerative tariff fixation will lead to vicious circle of larger debt, unsustainable discoms & delegitimization of regulatory assets.**
- Subsidies or tariff compensation to discoms are as high as (15%)& it is increasing rapidly which is not in pace with cost of supply.

Way forward:

- **A trade-off between sufficiency and affordability** of power must be arrived .
- The **tariffs should reflect the cost of supplying electricity** .

- **A robust system of DBT** should be developed to reduce the financial burden of consumers and free riding, theft of power by unscrupulous consumer can also be addressed by it.
- All the cross-subsidies should go out in phased manner and efficiency of utilities should be increased.
- **State regulators are duty-bound to safeguard consumer interests** and to encourage competition in the sector through policy interventions and reforms to ensure 24x7 quality power at affordable prices.

Agricultural Subsidies & Air Pollution

Why in News?

Increasing air pollution in national capital region and other northern states forces us to look after our current system of subsidies in Agriculture as it is a big reason for increasing air pollution.

- So, some changes could be made in the subsidies of the power, fertilizer and procurement fronts.

Current situation:

- People in Delhi and Indo-Gangetic Plain are choking due to air pollution.
- As winter dawns, the wind slows, temperatures drop, and suspended particulate matter (PM) accumulates.
- The high pollution in Delhi and its surrounding is due to the congested traffic, dust, construction, waste burning, etc,
- It gets a top-up from paddy-stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh.

What contributes to air pollution?

- **Agriculture's contribution** to air pollution runs even deeper than what happens between crop seasons.
- **Atmospheric ammonia comes from fertiliser use, animal husbandry, and other agricultural practices.**
- This combined with emissions from power plants, transportation, and other fossil fuel burning form fine particles.
- **Agriculture is a victim of pollution as well as a perpetrator.**
- **Particulate matter** and **ground-level ozone** (from industrial, power plant, and transportation emissions among others) cause losses in crop yields.
- Ozone damages plant cells, handicapping photosynthesis, while particulate matter dims the sunlight that reaches crops.

What is the irony?

- The irony of agricultural pollution is that taxpayers are essentially paying for it through a system of subsidies.
- These subsidies motivate the very behaviors that drive the agricultural emissions that the taxpayers breathe.

How does subsidy contribute to air pollution?

- **Free power** - hence "free" water, pumped from the ground - is a big part of what makes growing rice in these areas attractive.
- **Open-ended procurement of paddy**, in spite of bulging stocks of grains with the Food Corporation of India, adds to the incentives.
- Subsidies account for almost 15% of the value of rice being produced in Punjab-Haryana belt.

- **Fertiliser**, particularly urea in granular form, is highly subsidised.
- Urea is one of the cheapest forms of nitrogen-based fertiliser, but it is also one of the first to release ammonia into the air.
- This loss of nitrogen leads to a cycle of more and more fertiliser being applied to get the intended benefits for crops.

Way ahead:

- An important element to **correct in the policy matrix is the policy of subsidies on power, fertilisers and procurement.**
- The nature of support to farmers should be shifted from input subsidies to investment subsidies.
- **A diversification package**, equally contributed by the Centre and states, may be done to reduce agricultural pollution.
- **The approach to diversification has to be demand-led**, with a holistic framework of value chain, and not just focused on production.
- **On the fertiliser front**, instead of massive subsidisation of urea, the farmers could be given an input subsidy in cash on per hectare basis.
- Government procurement of paddy from farmers burning stubble in their fields may also be restricted.
- Taken together, these measures could double farmers' incomes, promote efficiency in resource use, and reduce pollution.

Real-time tax dispute resolution

Why in news?

Recently **Finance Minister told CII audience** that real-time mechanism are expected to be created to ensure tax differences don't become tax disputes.

Problem's with existing mechanism:

- In the last five years, **disputed direct tax claims have risen 2 times** (from Rs 4.1 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 8 lakh crore in FY19) while **actual direct tax collections have risen 1.8 times** (from Rs 6.3 lakh crore to Rs 11.4 lakh crore).
- **The taxman is losing lots of cases in the tribunals and courts** & a large share of the disputed tax claims are probably not genuine. Moreover, these disputed tax amounts are growing every year.

Why taxman appeals in most disputed cases even after losing it?

- They fear that the CAG & CBI will allege them for favoritism & investigate them.
- The government has to ensure that mediation panel has enough legal protection to do their job.
- Despite amending the **Prevention of Corruption Act** several times, it is unclear that the protection is absolute to them & it is unlikely tax officials manning the panel or even the independent experts in it would be willing to take a risk.

Way ahead:

- There needs to be some penalty against taxmen who make arbitrary demands.

- The tax Board needs to examine tax demands—where the tax implications are large—and to scrap them if they appear unreasonable and must issue necessary clarifications to field officials.
- Its high time that government should take a call aftermath the global arbitration panel awarded ruling in favour of Vodafone Plc.

India and World

Pakistan's Provincial Status to Gilgit-Baltistan

Why in News?

India has strongly rejected Pakistan's move to grant provisional provincial status to Gilgit - Baltistan.

- Gilgit-Baltistan is one of the **disputed territories** of India.

About Gilgit-Baltistan:

- It is a chunk of high-altitude territory located on the **north western corner of the Union Territory of Ladakh.**
- It is located strategically as it **borders Pakistan, Afghanistan and China.**
- The region was a **part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir**, but has been under Pakistan's control since **4th November, 1947**, following the invasion of Kashmir by tribal militias and the Pakistan army.
- **Maharaja Hari Singh**, the last Dogra ruler of J&K, had signed the **Instrument of Accession with India** on **26th October 1947.**
- India moved to the **United Nations Security Council** to raise the issue of Pakistan's invasion on **1st January 1948.**
- The UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for Pakistan to withdraw from all of Jammu and Kashmir and then India had to reduce its forces to the minimum level following which a plebiscite would be held to ascertain people's wishes.
- However, no withdrawal was ever carried out and it remains a point of contention between two countries.



Why does Pakistan want Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth province?

On 26th October 1947, Instrument of Accession was signed between the erstwhile ruler of J&K and India, but Pakistan did not accept the accession and Pakistan took administrative control of the territory.

Strategic Importance of the region—

- It is located at the confluence of **three geographical regions southern, central and eastern Asia.**
- **It is connected to 5 countries** namely Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, India and Tibet (China).
- It has cardinal geopolitical importance, and growing Chinese interest in recent years has elevated the region's import in the regional strategic landscape.
- The region is **minerally rich and has 50-100 gold and uranium mines** according to the report of the Mineral Department of the PoK.
- **Three glaciers** which are longest outside the Polar region are found here.

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- **China has proposed heavy investments** in the region through CPEC and other infrastructure projects.
- So, Pakistan has been **trying to ensure constitutional and legal guarantees to the region** due to its strategic importance.

India's response:

- India's official position is **opposed to a change in the status quo** in both parts of PoK.
- It stated that Pakistan's move to name Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province is meant to "**camouflage its illegal occupation**" of the area.
- It called upon Pakistan to immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation and said that it "**firmly rejects**" Pakistan's attempt "**to bring material changes to a part of Indian territory**, under its illegal and forcible occupation.
- It mentioned that the region was an integral part of India by virtue of the legal, complete and irrevocable accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Union of India in 1947.

What do the people of Gilgit-Baltistan want?

- The people have been demanding for years for the **same constitutional rights as Pakistani citizens have**.
- Around 1.5 million residents of the region are Shias and are angry against Pakistan for unleashing extremist sectarian militant groups against Shia people.
- **There is virtually no connection with India** and some have in the past demanded a merger with PoK, but the people of G-B have no real connection with Kashmir either.
- There is a **movement for independence**, but it has very little traction.

Mission Sagar - II

Why in News?

As part of 'Mission Sagar-II', the Government of India is **providing assistance to Friendly Foreign Countries to overcome natural calamities and Covid-19 pandemic**.

- Towards the same **INS Airavat** is delivering food aid for the **people of Sudan**.

Mission Sagar-II

- Mission Sagar-II, **follows the first 'Mission Sagar' undertaken in May-June 2020**, wherein India reached out to Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, and provided food aid and medicines.
- As part of **Mission Sagar-II, Indian Naval Ship Airavat will deliver food aid to Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea**.
- Mission Sagar-II, is in line with the **Prime Minister's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region 'SAGAR'** and highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with her maritime neighbours and further strengthens the existing bond.
- The Indian Navy is progressing this mission in close coordination with the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.

Under the Mission, India has-

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- **Deployed Medical Assistance Teams** in Mauritius and Comoros, helping their Governments deal with Covid emergency and in case of Comoros, with dengue fever also.
- **Delivered consignments of Covid related essential medicines** to Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros and Seychelles and about 600 tonnes of food items to Maldives.
- In addition, in case of Mauritius, **a special consignment of Ayurvedic medicines** was also being sent.
- The consignments also include **Hydroxychloroquine tablets**.

Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)

- SAGAR was launched in **2015**.
- It is India's **strategic vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- **Through SAGAR, India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.**
- Further, India seeks to **safeguard its national interests and ensure Indian Ocean region to become inclusive, collaborative and respect international law.**
- The key relevance of SAGAR emerges when seen in conjunction with India's other policies impacting the maritime domain like Act East Policy, Project Sagarmala, Project Mausam, India as 'net security provider', focus on Blue Economy etc.
- **SAGAR highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with her neighbouring countries and further strengthens the existing bond.**

India-UAE Meet on Investments

Why in News?

Recently, the eighth meeting of the **India-UAE High-Level Joint Task Force on Investments** has been **virtually hosted** by India in the wake of the ongoing **pandemic**.

Key Points

- The Joint Task Force was **created in 2012** as a crucial forum for further deepening the economic ties between the UAE and India.
 - The mechanism has assumed greater importance as the two countries signed the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) Agreement in January 2017** and the Joint Task Force is an integral component of it.
- The focus areas underlined in the CSP were economy with emphasis on a **two-way flow of investments, counter-terror cooperation and defence ties.**
- **India has signed CSPs with the UK, Indonesia, Vietnam and Australia.**
- At the meeting, both sides **reviewed the existing UAE Plus and the Fast Track Mechanism created in 2018.**
 - **UAE Plus** is a special and dedicated desk constituted under **Invest India** with Arabic speaking officials to help facilitate investments.



- **The Fast Track Mechanism** aims to resolve any challenges experienced by UAE investors in India.

Scope of Improvement:

- Explore ways to **facilitate investments in key Indian and UAE sectors with potential for economic growth**, and to maintain their dialogue and further build on the considerable achievements of the Joint Task Force.
- **Encourage investment and cooperation in areas of mutual interest** with the purpose to stimulate economic activities in the post-Covid-19 times.
- Address specific barriers to trade, like **anti-dumping duties** tariffs and regulatory restrictions between the two countries with an aim to further strengthen the trade and economic ties and to coordinate efforts and promote mutual cooperation.
- **Continue the work between respective civil aviation authorities to ensure speedy normalisation of air transport operations** for their mutual benefit.
- Development and operation of UAE-based funds to invest in India, in the light of the **Foreign Portfolio Investor Regulations 2019 by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**.
 - India agreed to look into these issues with the objective of facilitating further direct investments of UAE-based funds and seeking mutually beneficial solutions in that regard.
- Focus on opportunities for cooperation and potential investments in key sectors in India including the **healthcare and pharmaceutical industry, mobility and logistics, food and agriculture, energy and utilities and others**.

India-UAE relationship:

- UAE is **India's third largest foreign trading partner** with bilateral trade at around **53 billion USD**.
- **India is UAE's largest trading partner**.
- UAE is the **second largest export destination of Indian Goods and Services**.
- **Indians form the largest Foreign Diaspora in UAE** with over 3 million people. It is also largest population of Indian expatriates anywhere in the world. They form the soft power of India and the most important element in bilateral relationship – people to people tie.
- UAE is one of the **important crude oil suppliers to India** and important for India's energy security.

Why is relation with UAE important to India?

- **UAE is geographically located at Strait of Hormuz**. This is world's most important oil artery and strategically important for India's energy security.
- **Over 3 million Indians live in UAE**. This is the biggest Indian Diaspora anywhere in the world. They contribute to Indian economy through large remittances.
- **Safety of Indians is priority of Indian government** for which it needs support of UAE government.
- **UAE has one of the largest Sovereign Fund in the World**. UAE wish to invest fund in India particularly in National Infrastructure and Investment fund (NIIF). India needs fund for its infrastructure sector.
- **India needs UAE to contain Terrorism and Radicalization**. UAE is influential nation in Middle East and Muslim World. Of the 24 extraditions from Middle East in last few years, 18 had been from UAE and Saudi Arabia.
- **With US sanctions on Iran, India needs to import crude oil from other sources to meet its energy need**. UAE and Saudi Arabia have offered India with additional crude oil supplies to meet India's growing needs.

- **UAE has a substantial influence over Pakistan.** It deposited 3 billion USD in account of Pakistan's central bank. India can use this influence to bring Pakistan to negotiating table for talks on terrorism and bilateral relations.

India-Italy Bilateral Summit

Why in News?

Recently, a **virtual Bilateral Summit between India and Italy** has been held to comprehensively review the broad framework of the bilateral relationship and also strengthen cooperation against common global challenges, including the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Key Points

- Around a dozen agreements and MoUs covering areas such as **trade, investment, infrastructure, environment, fisheries, media and filmmaking**, are expected to be signed at the summit.
- The two sides will explore the possibility of increasing Italian investments in India and **enhancing defence cooperation and manufacturing under the Make in India initiative**.
- Both countries are keen to firmly **put behind the 2012 killing of two Indian crew members** of a fishing boat off the coast of Kerala by Italian marines.
- India sees **Italy, the third largest EU economy after Brexit** with robust manufacturing, technological and design capabilities, as a strong partner for the Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) initiatives.

Action Plan for an enhanced Partnership between India and Italy (2020-2024)

- Agreement to coordinate closely at multilateral forum especially G-20, **Italy will assume the Presidency of G-20 in December 2021 followed by India in 2022**.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between **Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP)**, an Italian investment bank and National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF) to promote innovative financial schemes capable of supporting bilateral investments.
- Welcoming the progress made under **India-Italy Science and Technology Cooperation** and the India-Italy Executive Programme of Cooperation.
- Pledging to strengthen **cooperation in the fight against terrorism and transnational crime** both at a bilateral level and in multilateral fora and also agreed to hold the next meeting of the 'India-Italy Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism' to further advance cooperation, exchange of expertise and capacity building in 2021.
- India and Italy acknowledging the potential of new international organisations such as the **Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructures (CDRI) and the International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.
- Reaffirming their commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement and their respective nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

India-Italy relations

- India-Italy relations are characterized by warmth and friendship.
- Relations between India and Italy date back to ancient times with works from authors such as **Diodorus Siculus' Library of History, Arrian's Indika, and Pliny the Elder's Natural History** make references to India.
- Caches of Roman coins have been discovered across the Indian peninsula, and evidence indicates the existence of permanent settlements of Roman merchants in South India.

- The discovery of an Indian ivory statuette in the ruins of Pompeii confirms that goods were traded both ways.

Relations in Recent Times

- Bilateral trade between India and Italy grew by **12 times in the 2 decades between 1991 and 2011**, from EUR 708 million to **EUR 8.5 billion**.
- By 2012 Italy had an accumulated investment of **9%** of the total European Union FDI in India.
- Italy accounted for **2.3%** of India's total investment in the European Union.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Deal

Why in news?

Recently, Russia brokered a new peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Which lead to end of month long deadly War.

What is the new peace deal?

- The deal is meant to end the military conflict between the two nations over the disputed region of **Nagorno-Karabakh**.
- It was signed by **Russian President, Azerbaijani President and Armenian Prime Minister**.
- As per the new peace deal, both sides will now **maintain positions in the areas that they currently hold**.
- This will mean a significant gain for Azerbaijan as it has reclaimed over 15-20% of its lost territory during the recent conflict.
- Further, under this agreement, all military operations are suspended.

Role of Russia

- Russian peacekeepers will be deployed along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor that connects the region to Armenia. These peacekeepers will be deployed in the area for a period of five years.
- Refugees and internally displaced persons will return to the region and the adjacent territories.
- The two sides will also exchange prisoners of wars and bodies.
- **A new corridor** will be opened from **Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan, which will be under Russian control**.
- Russia's role in the conflict has been somewhat opaque since,
 - It supplies arms to both countries and
 - It is in a military alliance with Armenia called the **Collective Security Treaty Organisation**.

About Nagorno-Karabakh region:

- Nagorno-Karabakh, straddling western Asia and Eastern Europe, is **internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan**. But most of the region is **controlled by Armenian separatists**.
- It has been **part of Azerbaijan territory since the Soviet era**. When the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s, **Armenia's regional parliament voted for the region's transfer to Armenia**. But, the Soviet authorities turned down the demand.

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- Years of clashes followed between Azerbaijan forces and Armenian separatists.
- While the area remains in Azerbaijan, it is governed by Armenians who declared it a republic called “Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast”.
- While the Armenian government does not recognise Nagorno-Karabakh as independent, it supports the region politically and militarily.

Have there been other ceasefire agreements?

- Even after the 1994 peace deal, the region has been marked by **regular exchanges of fire**.
- In 2016, it saw a Four-Day War before Russia mediated peace.
- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has tried to get the two countries to reach a peace agreement for many years.
- In October 2020, both countries agreed to a ceasefire agreement, which was also brokered by Russia but was unsuccessful.

The role of ethnicity in the conflict between them?

- Ethnic tensions from decades ago have a crucial role in the dispute.
- **The Azeris claim** that the disputed region was under their control in known history.
- **Armenians maintain that** Karabakh was a part of the Armenian kingdom.
- The disputed region has a **majority Armenian Christian population**, but it is internationally recognised as a part of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan.

Track 1.5 Dialogue

Why in news?

The third round of **India-Canada Track 1.5 Dialogue** will take place on a virtual platform.

Agenda of the Dialogue:

- The countries will deliberate on and define the **role of India and Canada in the post-COVID-19 world**.
- The scholars and experts will go into various facets of the strategic partnership linking the two countries.
- They will discuss about the **new geo-economics of the Indo-Pacific and digital cooperation**, particularly in the **areas of fintech and AI**.
- This dialogue creates a template for a **merger of government to government diplomacy, with public diplomacy**.

About Track 1.5 dialogue:

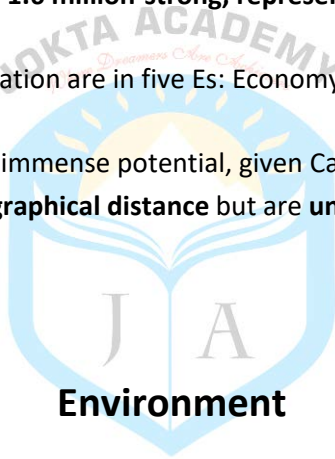
- The Track 1.5 Dialogue has been piloted since **February 2018**.
- It was piloted by two think tanks — **India’s Gateway House and Canada’s Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)**.
- Their collaboration has encouraged the governments to focus on the immediate opportunities available in investment, technology and geopolitical rearrangements.

What does the China-Canada tensions mean to India?

- There is a huge stress in **Canada-China relations**, turning Canadian public opinion against China.
- This opened the door to a closer relationship with India.
- **Canadians sympathise for India's troubles with China's intrusions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in eastern Ladakh since April 2020.
- In this backdrop, developments concerning the Indo-Pacific are of immense relevance to Canada.
- The forthcoming dialogue can deepen the India-Canada convergence on this issue.

Area of Emphasis During the Dialogue

- The other major focal point will be the economic and technological cooperation between the two countries.
- The recent positive trends are:
 - Canada-India merchandise trade exceeded **C\$10 billion in 2019**;
 - Canada's cumulative investment is a **substantive C\$55 billion**.
- Addressing the 'Invest India' conference in Canada, Prime Minister of India assured Canadian investors that no barriers would come in their way.
- Indian students are increasingly being educated in Canada.
- **The Indian diaspora in Canada is now 1.6 million-strong, representing over 4% of the country's total population.**
- The principal areas of bilateral cooperation are in five Es: Economy, Energy, Education, Entertainment and Empowerment of women.
- In particular, the digital domain holds immense potential, given Canada's proven assets in technology.
- **India and Canada are divided by geographical distance but are united through clear common interests and shared values.**



Typhoon Goni

Why in News?

Recently, Typhoon Goni has made landfall in the **eastern Philippines**.

Key Points:

- **Goni** is also known as **Rolly** in the Philippines.
- It is the **most powerful storm** to hit the country **since Typhoon Haiyan killed more than 6,000 people in 2013**.
- Catastrophic violent winds and intense to torrential rainfall would hammer areas in the typhoon's path.
- **Goni comes a week after Typhoon Molave** hit the same region of the natural disaster-prone archipelago and killed 22 people.
- Goni is the **18th storm of 2020 for the Philippines**.

Evaluation of National Monsoon Mission

Why in News?

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Recently, the **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)** has evaluated the **economic benefits of Investment in Monsoon Mission and High-Performance Computing Facilities.**

Objectives of Monsoon Mission of India

- **Improvement of monsoon forecast skills** with the help of partnerships between academic and research and development organizations nationally and internationally.
- Improvement of prediction skill of:
 - Seasonal and Extended range predictions and
 - Short and Medium range (up to two weeks) prediction.

Need for National Monsoon Mission

- **Need for improved weather advisories** – In India, 82 percent of rural poor live in rain-fed areas and rain-fed agriculture is a significant contributor to agricultural production.
- Indian Summer Monsoon Rainfall (ISMR) amounts to more than 80 percent of the annual rainfall in the country playing a pivotal role in food production. Hence, a mission like NMM was needed to **improve assimilation and forecasting systems to predict monsoon.**

Evaluation of National Monsoon Mission – NCAER Report

It was launched in **2012** with an aim to develop state-of-the-art monsoon prediction systems for short, medium and long-range forecasts.

- As per the NCAER report, National Monsoon Mission will **benefit 1.07 crores below poverty line (BPL) agricultural households and 523 lakh BPL fisherfolk households in the country.** The other important details are:
 - The monsoon mission of India will give 50 times more benefit on the investment made under it and on the high-performance Computing programs over a period of 5 years (till 2025.)
 - A more accurate weather forecast led to a structural change in the production level of food grains in the last **4-5 years.**
 - In the irrigated districts, the production level of food grains increased in the post-monsoon-mission period.
 - Rain-fed districts witnessed the increase in the production level of food grains in both pre-monsoon mission and post-monsoon mission with a significant increase in the latter.

Data Analysis of the Benefits:

- Based on weather advisories, **98% farmers** made modifications such as changing variety/breed of the crop, arranging storage of harvest, early/delayed harvesting, changed crop, early/delayed sowing, changed the schedule of ploughing/land preparation, changed pesticide application schedule, changed fertiliser application schedule and changed scheduled irrigation.
- **94% of farmers were able to avoid losses and increase income** because of services provided through NMM.
- **82% of fishermen surveyed**, reported using OSF advisories before they venture into the sea every time.
- A total of approximately **Rs 1.92 crore additional income was generated from 1,079 successful fishing expeditions made using PFZ advisories.**

Deemed Forests

Why in news?

Karnataka government may **declassify 67% of the 9.94 lakh hectares of deemed forests in the state and hand it over to Revenue authorities.**

About deemed forests

- The concept of deemed forests has **not been clearly defined** in any law including the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) of 1980.
- But, the Supreme Court (SC) in **T N Godavarman Thirumalpad case (1996)** accepted a wide definition of forests under the Act.
- The SC said that the term **‘forest land’** occurring in **Section 2 of the FCA** will include,
 - ‘Forest’ as understood in the dictionary sense,
 - Any areas recorded as forest in the government record, whether designated as reserved, protected or otherwise, irrespective of the ownership.
- The SC said that the **provisions of the FCA 1980** for the **conservation of forest** and the matters connected therewith must **apply to all forest irrespective of the ownership or classification.**

Expert committee definition of Deemed Forest:

- **Karnataka constituted an expert committee to identify ‘deemed forests’** as land having the characteristic of forests irrespective of the ownership.
- In 2002, the committee said in a report that the following could be ‘deemed forests’,
 - **Thickly wooded areas of the Revenue Department** not handed over to the Forest Department;
 - **Thickly wooded areas recommended to be handed over to the Forest Department;**
 - Thickly wooded land **distributed to grantees but not cultivated;** and
 - Thickly wooded **plantations of the Forest Department.**

Why does Karnataka want to release 67% of its deemed forests?

- In 2014, the then government said that some of the **‘statutory forests’** had been **wrongly classified as ‘deemed forest’ by the expert committee.**
- The government also said that where the dictionary definition of forests was applied to identify deemed forests, scientific criteria was not used.
- This resulted in a **subjective classification of areas as deemed forests.**
- This classification in turn resulted in conflicts between the Forest Department and other departments like Revenue, Irrigation, etc.
- There is also a commercial demand for mining in some regions designated as deemed forests.
- Committees constituted during this regime **identified 5.18 lakh hectares of deemed forest that could be released from the total deemed forest.**
- An affidavit was filed in the SC in 2019 following a Cabinet decision.

Way forward:

- **Preservation of forest areas in India under the FCA, 1980** has been **continuously monitored by the SC** since the **Godavarman case judgment**.
- The state government must obtain **clearances from the SC for affecting changes to land classified as deemed forests** since the verdict.

Science and Technology

Digital Nation

Why in news?

Affordable smart phones and 750 million Internet connections access have made India a digital nation.

How has Fintech revolutionized India?

- Citizens who are accustomed to pay their routine bills by standing in queues at utility offices started adopting fintech.
- **During the COVID-19 pandemic, various Digital platforms started providing goods and services, including online education and telemedicine.** Many professionals have **maintained productivity by working from home.**

Is it early to call India a Digital Nation?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in **Bengaluru Tech Summit** said that the **true measure of digital nations is the readiness of governments to use technology** and it must be Open .
- The public systems must be participatory that citizens should consider it trustworthy.
- Governance must achieve a reliable system of digital welfare.
- There must be seamless delivery of all citizen services.
- All the above are not true to an extent.
- However, a beginning has been made to provide government-to-citizen services by establishing Common Service Centres .
- Legal advice are been provided to four lakh people under the **Tele-Law scheme**.
- Welfare benefits are provided through bank accounts digitally.
- If digital methods are applied to other sectors, such as road safety, it has the potential to reduce the accident mortality rate of about 1,50,000 deaths a year.

Technology and health sector:

- The **core plan in Ayushman Bharat is digital health identity for all.**
- It would help to **access ,prescribe and dispense essential medicines free.**
- The **public procurement cost reduces to 0.1% to 0.5% of GDP.**
- It can help in achieving universal health coverage (UHC).
- However efficient digital government depends on transforming internal processes government departments, redefining and fixing deadlines for citizen-centric service delivery.

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)

Why in news?

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) was **recognised by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)**.

What happened?

- The **Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the IMO** recognised the **IRNSS as a component of the World-wide Radio Navigation System (WWRNS)**.
- After the US, Russia and China that have their own navigation systems, **India became the fourth country to have its system recognised by IMO**.

About IMO:

- The IMO is the United Nations' specialised agency.
- It is responsible for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.

About IRNSS:

- **The IRNSS is an independent regional navigation satellite system** developed by India.
- The system is designed to **provide accurate position information service** to assist in the navigation of ships in the Indian Ocean waters.
- It is based on the **Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) satellites** that are used for navigation.
- It could replace the US-owned Global Positioning System (GPS) in the Indian Ocean waters up to 1500 km from the Indian boundary.

What does the IMO's recognition of the IRNSS mean?

- With the recognition, the IRNSS is similarly placed as GPS, most commonly used by marine shipping vessels across the world.
- Unlike GPS, **IRNSS is a regional and not a global navigation system**.
- This is also a significant achievement towards the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

IRNSS Users:

- While the system will be **open to all** including security agencies, all merchant vessels including small fishing vessels are authorised to use the system.
- Vessels that have transponders will be tracked by satellite navigation showing accurate position in the Indian Ocean region.
- At any given time, there are at least 2,500 merchant vessels in Indian waters that can all use the IRNSS.

Why was it necessary for India to have its own navigation system?

- An overdependence on one system (GPS) cannot be safe.
- The IMO encouraged countries to design their own navigation systems.
- The recognition accorded to IRNSS was in the process for two years.
- The IMO issued a circular announcing the recognition of the IRNSS to its member states.

Lung fibrosis

Why in news?

An article published in **Lung India** indicates that **pulmonary fibrosis is reported in vast number of post-Covid-19 survivors.**

About pulmonary fibrosis:

- **It is the inflammation of the tissue around the air sacs of the lungs** leading to fatigue and shortness of breath.
- The lungs become stiff and the ability of oxygen to enter the blood circulation diminishes.
- **It usually occurs in elderly people** but it is **now common among Covid-19 patients.**
- While the majority of patients affected by Covid-19 virus will stabilise or improve over time, some will progress to advanced lung fibrosis.
- Hence **large numbers of fibrosis cases may potentially result from the pandemic.**

High risk Population:

- It is too early to determine it.
- In the case of a 45-year-old non-smoker, who was in ICU with severe Covid-19 ARDS progressed to end stage fibrotic lung disease within 28 days, despite receiving steroids.
- However, those with moderate or severe disease, with persisting symptoms or radiological abnormalities, would require further investigation.

How can anti-fibrotic drugs prevent and treat of post-Covid fibrosis cases ?

- **Anti-fibrotic drugs** are believed to be **useful in patients with acute severity of interstitial lung disease (ILD)**
- Apart from drugs, focus should be on supportive management as well — giving home oxygen therapy, chest physiotherapy (breathing exercises under supervision) and good nutrition.
- Patients with the most severe ARDS are most likely to end up in fibrosis & they require prolonged ventilation with high oxygen requirements along with anti-fibrotics steroids.
- It is essential that post-Covid recovery clinics must extensively follow up on patients up to a total duration of 36 months to better understand the natural course of the disease.

Gender Equity in Science

Why in news?

The **draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy** aims to **increase the participation of women in science.**

Women representation in science:

- In the 2018 **Global Gender Gap report**, **India is ranked 108 out of 149 countries.**
- According to DST figures, the **share of women involved in scientific R&D increased from 13% to 29% from 2000-2001 to 2014-15** & it decreased to 14.71% in 2015-16.
- It is found that women are either **not promoted or often dropped out during their mid-career** to attend to their families.

- Hence **pilot programme-Gender Advancement through Transforming Institutions-** similar to **Athena SWAN** will be launched in India to address the issue.

About Athena SWAN(Scientific Women's Academic Network)?

- It is an evaluation and accreditation programme in started by UK in 2005 to **enhance gender equity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM).**
- Participating Institutes are graded depending on the enrolment of women and the advancement of the careers of women faculty and scientists.
- Institutions develop action plans to improve gender equity & are recognised by accrediting them with bronze, silver or gold medal.
- In 2019, **Ortus Economic Research in partnership with Loughborough University reveals that 93% of participants believed the programme had a positive impact on gender issues, 78% said it had impacted equality and diversity issues positively, and 78% noted a positive impact on the career progression of women.**

How it can be implemented in India?

- Since most of the universities, barring IITs and NITs, are runned and funded by the government, DST has to negotiate with them to bring changes in institutional policies, recruitment & promotions.
- The DST has tied up with NAAC to push gender equity through it.
- It is planning for an intensive gender sensitisation programmes among the top leaders of institutions.
- It aims to increase women members in selection committees during recruitment processes.
- In the future, the DST is likely to consider policy changes such as providing financial incentives through grants to institutes based on their performance which is similar to UK.

How will the pilot programme be launched?

- **Firstly 25 institutes will be shortlisted to carry out self-assessment on gender equity** in their departments.
- **Then British Council will assist DST** and facilitate collaboration between selected institutions under GATI with Athena SWAN-accredited institutions in the UK, with each institute here having a partner institute in the UK for guidance.

Retiring the phone-based OTPs

Why in news?

With increasing security threat and inconsistency in phone based OTP, there is need to replace ageing OTP model with alternative options, which are more secure, assessable, reliable and take care of security of citizens from cyber threats.

What is the problem with the current OTP model?

- Customers with good cell receptions are requesting for OTP resend & it doesn't function in dead zones.
- SMS-based OTPs are not secure & can be decrypted i.e. they are susceptible to call forwarding attacks or SIM jacking.
- SIM jacking means gaining access to phone accounts by sending malware to followers.
- If 0.1 % of OTP request fail, it will lead to lakhs of incomplete banking transactions.

What are the alternative options to OTP?

- OTP's can be sent to the **customer's registered email address, as a password-protected PDF file** as State Bank of India does.
- ATM machines can be repurposed to become OTP generators. Customer can request an ATM screen to print a backup set of five OTPs (expire in 30 days) which could be used when OTPs don't arrive promptly.
- **WhatsApp messages can be another viable option as it does not require SIM card, can work with WiFi & message delivery is more reliable.**
- Moreover WhatsApp messages cannot be snooped as they are secured with 128-bit encryption, 100% add free unlike like Google, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube & every Indian mobile phone has WhatsApp installed.
- Another option can be employing an **authenticator app- from Google or Microsoft**- which generates a new 6-8 digit code each minute in customer's phone. Once activated, it does not require a network connection to generate the OTP.
- Indian banks have tried their own authenticators but have rejected them because of technical glitches.
- Hence, banks should add backups to the ageing OTP/SMS platform, and over time, transit to a **more secure, internet-based, or app-based mechanism** to deliver the second-factor authentication code.

Himachal Pradesh Current Affairs

Brown Carbon 'TARBALLS' In Himalayan Atmosphere

Why in news?

- A recent study has found that **nearly 28 per cent of particles collected from the air samples** from a research station in the **Himalaya-Tibetan Plateau were tarballs**. The percentage of the tarballs increased on days of higher levels of pollution and could contribute to **hastening of glacial melt and global warming**.

According to the Study:

- The data revealed that a dense **array of active fire spots — corresponding to large-scale wheat-residue burning on the Indo-Gangetic Plain** — occurred along the pathways of air masses that reached the Himalayan research station during sampling.
- Air mass trajectories, satellite detection, and Weather Research and Forecasting model coupled to Chemistry simulations indicated that the **tarballs were emitted from biomass burning in the Indo-Gangetic Plain**.
- The researchers concluded that **tarballs from long-range transport can be an important factor in the climatic effect** and would correspond to a substantial influence on glacial melting in the Himalaya region.

About Brown Carbon 'Tarballs'?

- Tarballs are small light-absorbing, carbonaceous particles formed due to burning of biomass or fossil fuels that deposit on snow and ice.
- They are **formed from brown carbon**, emitted during the burning of fossil fuels.
- The median sizes of externally mixed tarballs and internally mixed tarballs were **213 and 348 nanometre** respectively.
- Primary brown carbon (BrC) co-emitted with black carbon (BC) from biomass burning is an important light-absorbing carbonaceous aerosol.
- **The black carbon from the Indo-Gangetic Plain can reach the Himalaya region and influence glacial melting and climatic change.**



AMRUT Mission

Why in News?

On October 9, 2020, Ministry of housing and urban affairs reviewed the progress of AMRUT Scheme in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Key Highlights

- **Around 32 projects** have been completed in the state of **Himachal Pradesh** under the scheme and **41 projects are under implementation**. In the state of **Uttarakhand**, **around 151 projects have been taken up**. Of these hundred projects are under implementation and 47 have been completed.
- They include new household water tap connections, sewer connections, street lights replaced with LED lights.
- Under the scheme rankings, **Uttarakhand was ranked 24th and Himachal Pradesh ranked 15th**.
- The cities have been instructed by the Ministry to take up the **“catch the rain” campaign**. The objective of the campaign is to conserve every drop of water. Under the campaign, rainwater harvesting will be incorporated in all structures of the cities.

Online building permission system

Both the states Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have implemented online building permission system. **This system is a part of ease of doing business in the cities.**

AMRUT Scheme

- It is **Atal mission for rejuvenation and urban transformation**. It focuses on **water supply, septage management, storm water drainage to reduce flooding, green space, non-motorized urban transport**.
- More than **500 cities** have been selected under the scheme. The cities were selected based on the following criteria
 - The cities with population more than 1 lakh
 - All the capital cities that are not covered in the above criteria
 - 10 cities from islands, tourist destinations and Hill States.
 - 13 cities on rivers with population more than 75000 and less than 1 lakh.
 - All the cities that are classified as Heritage cities under the HRIDAY scheme

HRIDAY scheme

It is the **national city development and augmentation Yojana** that was launched on **21st January 2015**. It aims to **conserve heritage and increase economic growth of Heritage cities**. It is being implemented by the **Ministry of housing and urban affairs**.

Multispeciality Hospital Chamiana

Why in News?

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur visited the under construction **Multispeciality Hospital, Chamiana near Shimla** and directed the officers to **ensure completion of this project by June next year**.

Key Highlights:

- The super specialty hospital would have all the major specialized facilities in cardiology, neurology, nephrology, gastroenterology etc
- The complex would also house residential accommodation for junior and senior resident doctors besides hostel facilities for other para medical staff.

Rural drinking water and sanitation committees

In News:

- In order to ensure quality drinking water in the state, rural drinking water and **sanitation committees are being constituted in all gram panchayats** of the state according to the **guidelines of the Jal Jeevan Mission**.
- A total of **47 laboratories** have been set up to ensure the availability of clean drinking water in the state and it would also be ensured that **all district level laboratories are accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Laboratories (NABL)**.

Ambassador of Republic of Korea calls on Governor

In News:

- **Shin Bong-Kil**, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea called on Governor **Bandaru Dattatraya** in Raj Bhavan and discussed gamut of issues for strengthening Indo-Korean bilateral relations.
- Himachal Pradesh and the Republic of Korea could collaborate in the field of **tourism development, industrial investment, agriculture, environment, technology and skill development in particular as well as cultural exchange**.

Ambassador of USA calls on Governor

In News:

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Kenneth I. Juster, Ambassador of United States of America to India called on Governor **Bandaru Dattatraya** in Raj Bhavan and discussed cultural ties and development of tourism sector in the state.

Key Highlights:

- They discussed **strengthening cooperation in tourism** and creating more **avenues for education sector in the US, for students from the state.**
- He shared with the Ambassador the **developments in the field of tourism and education sectors, besides strategic issues of border areas of Himachal with China.**
- The Governor also honoured him by presenting **Himachali cap, shawl and portrait of Raj Bhavan.**

Roerich Art Gallery

Why in News?

Governor **Bandaru Dattatraya** has visited the well-known **Roerich Art Gallery** founded by **Nicholas Roerich**, a Russian painter at Naggar in district Kullu.

About Nicholas Roerich

- **Nicholas Roerich lived in Naggar for 26 years** and during this period, he produced more than **7000 paintings** which are unique in itself.
- The Roerich Art Gallery depicted **Indo-Russian culture** very beautifully. It depicts the characteristics of the culture of the two countries
- Nicholas has made a great effort to **cherish the rich cultural heritage of Himalayan culture especially in Kullu, Chamba and Lahaul-Spiti districts.** His works attract the researchers.
- **Preserving the cultural heritage** was a feature of Nicholas artistic creations.
- Roerich Art Gallery gave **Naggar an international identity.**

The Himachal government is committed to preserve the splendor of this Gallery so that the future generations continue to know about the Himalayan culture. Nicholas was not only a great painter, but also an archaeologist.

Himachal Pradesh anti-conversion law

Why in News?

After the murder of a girl in broad daylight, **Haryana's Home Minister Anil Vij** has highlighted that the state government is looking over the possibility of making a new law for forced conversions. Not only this, but **Vij has also sought information about a similar law already in place in Himachal Pradesh- Anti Conversion Law.**

About Anti-Conversion Law?

Himachal Pradesh government enacted the **Anti-Conversion Law in 2007** after passing Freedom of Religion Bill, 2006. **This law prohibits religious conversions through force or fraud.** The state government has also passed a **new Freedom of Religion Bill in 2019 with an aim to repeal the 2006 bill.** Himachal Pradesh CM Jai Ram Thakur says that more stringent law is required on forced religious conversions.

The key features of Anti-Conversion Law of Himachal Pradesh are-

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- **No person should convert or attempt to convert the religion of any other person through fraud, deception or for the sole purpose of marriage.**
- This law **does not cover conversion to parent religion.**
- **Freedom of Religion Bill, 2019 states that** a person needs to notify the district magistrate at least 1 month prior converting his/her religion. The magistrate will then conduct an inquiry to find out the reason for conversion.
- **A person involved in forceful conversions can be jailed for a term upto 5 years.** In case the victim is minor, **SC/ST or woman**; the punishment can be extended upto **7 years.**
- All the offences under this act will be **non-bailable**. Also, **failure of prior information about conversion** can lead to **imprisonment of 2 years.**

‘Brahma Bodhi’

In News:

- It is a **multi-lingual magazine on art and culture published by the Brahmnaad Cultural Society**, this edition of the magazine is based on the concept **‘Ashtamatrika Yantra’**.
- **Shri Rupak Mehta** is the Publisher and Editor of the Magazine.

Tulsi Ram

In News:

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has expressed grief over the demise of **former Speaker of H.P. Vidhan Sabha Tulsi Ram**, who passed away at **Palampur in Kangra district**.

Him Suraksha Abhiyan

Why in News?

The government of Himachal Pradesh on **November 24, 2020**, launched **‘Him Suraksha Abhiyaan’** in order to **sensitize people about the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic**. The **door-door campaign throughout the Himachal state will also collect information regarding the symptoms of sugar, TB, Leprosy, and blood pressure.**

- The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Jai Ram Thakur has also made an appeal to the citizens to share their information with health workers if they have any symptoms of the virus.

Him Suraksha Abhiyaan: Key Highlights

- In the campaign, **around 8,000 teams comprising personnel from Ayurveda, health, Panchayati raj department, women and child development, and NGOs will be involved** for door-to-door collection of health parameters.
- The teams will be sensitizing people about the pandemic and will also be collecting real-time information regarding symptoms of other diseases.
- The health workers will also be tracking the mountains, snow-covered valleys, and the areas that are not connected by the roads to reach out to the population.

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- The health workers will be **provided with mobile phone applications for feeding data on the health profiles of the family members, panchayat-wise and village-wise which will then be tabulated, monitored, stored, and analyzed at the state administration level.**
- Under the drive, **not only symptomatic patients with probable COVID-19 infection will be detected but patients who have other ailments will also be listed.**

Night Curfew and closure of schools amid the rising COVID-19 cases

In News?

- In the past three weeks, Himachal Pradesh has seen a worst-spike in the cases of Coronavirus, the fastest spread of infection, and a high mortality rate.
- To control the situation, the government has already taken a decision of imposing a night curfew in **four districts of Mandi, Shimla, Kangra, and Kullu.**
- It has also directed **schools and colleges to remain closed till December 31, 2020.**
- Chief Minister has blamed the spike in COVID-19 cases on people for **not following social-distancing norms during wedding functions, large gatherings, and market places** also those who will **not be wearing face masks will not be fined Rs. 1,000 by the authorities.**

Dr. Gaurav Sharma

In News:

- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has congratulated **Dr. Gaurav Sharma** who has been **elected to the Parliament of New Zealand** recently. Dr. Gaurav Sharma hails from **Hadeta village of Hamirpur district.**
- Dr. Sharma has become **first parliamentarian of Indian origin who had taken oath in Sanskrit in New Zealand.**
- Expressing his pleasure, Chief Minister said that Dr. Gaurav Sharma has brought pride to the country by taking oath in Sanskrit in a foreign country. He wished Dr. Gaurav Sharma a bright future.

Defence

- The Defence Research and Development (DRDO) successfully test-fired BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, with several indigenous features, from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Balasore in Odisha.
- The Indian Coast Guard Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) ICGS 'Kanaklata Barua' was commissioned at the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd in Kolkata on 30 September 2020.
- ISRO is scheduled to launch its Venus mission in 2025 and France will participate in it.
- The indigenously developed Laser Guided Anti Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) was successfully test fired by DRDO on 1st Oct 2020.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) from Wheeler Island off the coast of Odisha.

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- Offshore Patrol vessel 'Vigraha', designed and built by the Larsen and Toubro (L&T) Shipbuilding under the 'Make in India' initiative is launched by the Indian Coast Guard at a private shipyard in Kattupalli, north of Chennai on 6th October 2020.
- The Indian Navy conducted a two-day coastal security exercise called "Sagar Kavach".
- The new generation anti-radiation missile named Rudram 1 which has been generated to kill enemy radar is successfully tested in the Balasore test range located off the coast of Odisha in Bay of Bengal.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has test-fired indigenously developed Drone RUSTOM II in Karnataka.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has test-fired Nirbhay Cruise Missile from Odisha.
- India successfully conducted the night trial of its nuclear-capable Prithvi-2 missile on 16 October 2020 from Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur near Balasore, off Odisha coast.
- On 18th October India successfully test fired the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from the Indian Navy's indigenously-built stealth destroyer INS Chennai.
- The eighth edition of annual Indian Navy (IN) and Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) bilateral maritime exercise SLINEX-20 is scheduled be held off Trincomalee in Sri Lanka from 19 to 21 October 2020.
- India successfully test fired the Stand-Off Anti-Tank Missile called SANT.
- The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved a new Defence Research Development Organization Procurement Manual, 2020.
- Indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvettes INS Kavaratti under Project 28 (Kamorta class) will be commissioned into the Indian Navy by Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Naravane, at Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam.
- The Indian Army launched a messaging mobile application called the SAI.
- The 24th edition of the Malabar naval exercise scheduled in two phases in November will see the participation of Indian Navy (IN), United States Navy (USN), Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), and Royal Australian Navy (RAN).
- Indian Navy test fired the Anti-Ship Missile from INS Kora in Bay of Bengal. The missile hit the destined target successfully.

Sports

- The Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Kiren Rijiju launched the new logo of Sports Authority of India's (SAI) at Delhi's Major Dhyan Chand Stadium.
- In Shooting, India's Visnu Shivaraj Pandian has won the 10m air rifle event at the fifth edition of the International Online Shooting Championship held on 3rd October 2020.
- The Indian women's cricket team has overtaken New Zealand to rise to the third spot in the T20 International standings and retained the second position in the ODI chart of the latest ICC rankings.
- Lewis Hamilton has won the 2020 Eifel Grand Prix, held on 11 October 2020.
- The India's first-ever homegrown professional badminton brand "Transform" appointed Commonwealth Games medallist in Badminton, Chetan Anand as the brand ambassador.
- This is Nadal's 20th Grand Slam and 13th French Open title.
- Young Indian Chess player Nihal Sarin has been declared as a winner in the 2020 Junior Speed Online Chess Championship of Chess.com in Chennai.
- The National Basketball Association (NBA) Championship 2020 held on 12 October 2020.

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- All India Football Federation, the apex body for the sport of football in the country, announced the launch of their new motto 'Indian Football. Forward Together', defining the new brand direction.
- Robert Lewandowski who is a Polish professional footballer who plays as a striker for Bundesliga club Bayern Munich won the UEFA Men's Player of the Year Award 2020.
- The famous Pakistani bowler Umar Gul has announced that he will retire from all forms of cricket. The 36-year-old Gul had a cricket career that spanned twenty years.
- An annual badminton tournament the Denmark Open which was organized by Danmarks Badminton Forbund was concluded in Denmark.
- The 2019-20 I-League title won by Mohun Bagan.
- The Odisha Government will pay the Indian Rugby Football Union (also known as Rugby India) ₹3 crore as sponsor of National teams over three years.
- Andrey Rublev joined Novak Djokovic as the only men to win four tour singles titles in the St. Petersburg Open tennis tournament.
- The 2020 Portuguese Grand Prix which is held on 25 October 2020 won by Lewis Hamilton.
- The BCCI has announced the Indian squads for the upcoming tour of Australia, the team's first international outing since the COVID-19 lockdown forced the home series against South Africa to be called off mid-way.

CATEGORY	WINNER	Runner -Up
Men's Single	Anders Antonsen (Denmark)	Rasmus Gemke(Denmark)
Women's Single	Nozomi Okuhara (Japan)	Carolina Marin (Spain)
Men's Double	Marcus Ellis and Chris Langridge (England)	Vladimir Ivanov and Ivan Sozonov (Russia)
Women's Double	Fukushima Yuki and Hirota Sayaka (Japan)	Matsumoto Maya and Nagahara Wakana (Japan)
Mixed Double	Mark Lamsfuss and Isabel Herttrich (Germany)	Chris and Gabby Adcock (England)

Awards of the IPL 2020:

- **Orange Cap** (Most Runs) - KL Rahul (Kings XI Punjab) - 670 runs in 14 matches
- **Purple Cap** (Most Wickets) - Kagiso Rabada (Delhi Capitals) - 30 wickets in 17 matches
- **Most Valuable Player** - Jofra Archer (Rajasthan Royals) - 20 wickets and 175 dot balls in 14 matches
- **Emerging Player of the Season** - Devdutt Padikkal (Royal Challengers Bangalore) - 483 runs in 15 matches
- **Dream XI Game Changer of the Season** - KL Rahul (Kings XI Punjab) - 975 Fantasy Points
- **Most Sixes in the Season** - Ishan Kishan (Mumbai Indians) - 30 sixes in 14 matches
- **Tata Altroz Super Striker of the Season** - Kieron Pollard (Mumbai Indians) - Strike Rate of 191.42

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- **CRED Power Player of the Season-** Trent Boult (Mumbai Indians) - 16 wickets in powerplay
- **Fair Play Award** - Mumbai Indians

Summits and Conferences

- Dr. MahendraNath Pandey, Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Ministry and Mr. Barry O'Farrell, Australian High Commissioner to India engaged conference through video conferencing.
- Union Minister for Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar addressed the United Nations Biodiversity Summit.
- The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Summit, a global virtual summit of overseas and resident Indian Researchers and Academicians.
- The 19th round of Foreign Office Consultation was held between India and Myanmar. Due to COVID19 the discussion was conducted through online mode.
- RAISE 2020- 'Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020' will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi .
- United Nations General Assembly held Fourth World Conference on Women 2020.
- Webinar held between India & Russia on the use of natural gas as motor fuel was organized under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India and the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation.
- Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs organized Swachhata ke 6 saal, Bemisaal on the occasion 6th Anniversary Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated RAISE 2020, a Mega Virtual Summit on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on 5th October 2020.
- NITI Aayog, The New and Renewable Energy Ministry, and Invest India which is a non-profit venture under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has organised India PV-Edge 2020 summit.
- Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitaraman chaired the 42nd GST Council Meet.
- On 6th October, the Foreign ministers of four Quad countries (the United States, Japan, India and Australia) held in Tokyo, Japan.
- Russia will host 12th BRICS Summit virtually on 17 November.
- Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is organizing an International Conference on 'Mental Health – Looking beyond COVID 19' virtually through Video Conferencing.
- Prime Minister of India to address Invest India Conference in Canada.
- BRICS Ministerial Summit 2020 held through online mode via Video Conferencing.
- Seventh Meeting of Ministers of Justice of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will be held on October 16.
- The fifth meeting of India Mexico bilateral high-level group on trade, investment and cooperation was held virtually.
- The Sixth Session of India-Norway Joint Commission was held. India was represented by the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.
- The Annual Meeting 2021 of the World Economic Forum (WEF) will be scheduled to be held on from May 18 to 21, 2021 instead of the usual January-end each year in in Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland.

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- The first edition of Lectures designed to introduce India to foreign diplomats posted in New Delhi was inaugurated by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.
- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare organized Mahila Kisan Diwas through Video Conferencing.
- On 15th October, a webinar held between India and Kazakhstan.
- Union Minister of State for Agriculture Shri Parshottam Rupala inaugurated the Two-day 4th India Agricultural Outlook Forum 2020.
- 102nd World Bank Development Committee Plenary Meeting held virtually.
- Ravi Shankar Prasad, the Union Law Minister virtually hosted the 7th Justice Minister's meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states on October 16, 2020.
- A Webinar conducted on 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat: Fostering Steel Usage in Rural Economy, Agriculture, Rural Development, Dairying and Food Processing'.
- The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and external affairs minister Jay Shankar will hold 2+2 dialogue with their United States counter parts mark as per and Mike pompeo.
- India and Indonesia are to hold the fifth joint working group on coal.
- The first-ever virtual G20 (Group of Twenty) Youth 20 (Y20) Global Summit was virtually hosted from Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia for exchanging ideas and dialogues for the empowerment of youth Post COVID, where Indian side was represented by Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Kiren Rijiju.
- The 6th edition of India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 will be held from 22nd to 25th December, 2020.
- The 18th meeting of Prosecutors General of SCO was held on 20 October 2020, via video conference.
- The India Vietnam Business Forum was organised virtually on 20th October.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare virtually addressed the World Bank- IMF annual meeting.
- The 6th BRICS Parliamentary Forum has been organised virtually on 27 October 2020.
- The Centre has set up a high-level committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate the 400th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- On 28th October, second edition of India-Central Asia Dialogue was held virtually.
- Ministry of Tourism organises a webinar on "Bundi: Architectural Heritage of a Forgotten Rajput Capital" under Dekho Apna Desh Webinar Series on October 24, 2020.
- The finance ministry said India and the United Kingdom have agreed to establish a bilateral Sustainable Finance Forum.
- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan chaired over an inter-ministerial meet with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on October 15, 2020.
- Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Food Processing Industries, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj virtually inaugurated the India – International Food & Agri Week being organised from 16th to 22nd October 2020.

Agreements and MoUs Signed:

- NITI Aayog and the Embassy of the Netherlands, New Delhi, has signed a Statement of Intent (Sol) to support the 'decarbonization and energy transition agenda' for accommodating cleaner and more energy.

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- India's leading stock exchange BSE has signed a pact with private sector lender Yes Bank to empower the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) listed on the platform.
- The United States Agency for International Development in India has been selected for funding from the White House-led Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative and it will collaborate with SEWA Bharat to support women entrepreneurs using the funding amount.
- Considering the importance of Carbon Capture, Utilisation & Storage (CCUS) in India's fight against Climate Change and Global Warming, meeting the growing energy demands and building a strong ecosystem to meet commitments under Paris Agreement, Tata Steel and Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) sign MoU to collaborate in the area of Carbon Capture, Utilisation & Storage (CCUS).
- SBI and FMCG major HUL announced a partnership to enable easy access to credit to small retailers and also help them join the digitisation bandwagon in order to "survive in the new world".
- India and the United States have entered into a defence deal worth \$90-million, wherein US would provide equipment, spare parts and logistical support for India's fleet of C-130J Super Hercules cargo aircraft.
- India and France have collaborated to jointly launch the constellation of maritime surveillance satellites for the Indian Ocean Region, to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships.
- To take street food vendors' businesses online, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) signed MoU with Swiggy under PM SVANIDHI Scheme.
- To make textbooks and other study material easily accessible for deaf children through sign language, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) signed an MoU with the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC).
- With an aim to showcase and promote new agriculture technology and innovations, Prasar Bharati sign an MoU with IFFCO.
- The Union Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding signed between India and Japan on cyber security.
- India has signed agreements of cooperation in Artificial Intelligence, 5G technology with Japan.
- The Union Territory of Ladakh signed an MoU with the National Dairy Development Board to conduct survey in the rural livelihood of Ladakh.
- India and France will jointly launch the constellation of maritime surveillance satellites that will be able to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships in the Indian Ocean Region.
- All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) which is a public Ayurveda medicine and research institution located in New Delhi signed agreement with Amity University (Private Research University) to Promote research in Ayurveda.
- Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited has signed MoUs with the corporate companies to develop upcoming metro stations.
- The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath and Zurich Airport International, Switzerland has signed a concessionaire agreement for the development of Jewar Airport in Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida.
- The Meghalaya government has partnered with Israel for setting up a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on high value vegetables in the state in a bid to improve and promote the livelihoods of farmers.
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has inked three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the State Bank of India (SBI) to extend credit support for various projects in Gujarat.
- Amazon India had partnered with Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to provide their customers with the facility to book reserved train tickets on its platform.
- Infosys signed an agreement with Blue Acorn iCi to acquire a digital customer experience, commerce and analytics services provider for up to USD 125 million (about Rs 915 crore).
- HDFC Bank and Apollo Hospitals have joined hands to launch The HealthyLife Programme, a holistic

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- healthcare solution which makes healthy living accessible and affordable on Apollo's digital platform, Apollo 24|7.
- The Department of Science & Technology (DST) partnered with IBM India for promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) learning among students and to inspire them towards STEM careers.
- IIT Kanpur and CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) signed an MoU to establish a 1.3 peta FLOP supercomputing facility at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).
- The Government of India's All India Council For Technical Education (AICTE) has partnered with Microsoft to empower learners and educators with future-ready skills.
- Uber tied-up with Amazon Pay that will allow users in India to pay for their rides on the ride-hailing platform using Amazon Pay.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved USD 300 million loan for India to finance the Rajasthan Secondary Towns Development Sector Project.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed loan agreement worth 270 million dollars with India with an aim to improve water supply and integrated storm water and sewage management infrastructure in 64 cities of Madhya Pradesh.
- Intel India and the State Government of Telangana partnered with each other with an aim to launch of an applied artificial intelligence (AI) research (INAI) center in Hyderabad.
- India and Maldives on October 12, 2020 concluded the Line of Credit (LOC) Agreement of USD 400 million for the implementation of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP).
- With an aim to foster cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region the National Maritime foundation of India and Taiwan Asia Exchange Foundation recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU).
- The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) has extended a Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 400 million (about Rs 2,932 crore) to Maldives.
- With an aim to create a successful and innovative workforce from the Atal Tinkering Lab, ATL schools, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) partnered with CGI India.
- Indian Rugby Football Union (IRFU) which is the governing body for rugby union in India signed MoU with Odisha State Government to sponsor the Indian National Rugby Team for tenure of three years (till 2023).
- Indian Bank has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) for payment of subsidy to street vendors under the Centre's SVANidhi Scheme.
- Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has received Rs 5,550 crore from global investment firm KKR, which has picked up 1.28 per cent stake in its retail arm.
- In collaboration with HDFC bank, Apollo Hospitals initiated a program named 'HealthyLife Programme' for its customers.
- "IKEA Family Credit Card by Citi" is launched by IKEA in collaboration with Citibank India and Mastercard.
- Flipkart-owned PhonePe launched car and bike insurance products on its platform in association with Bajaj Allianz General Insurance.
- IRDAI ordered life insurance companies to launch a standard term insurance policy 'Saral Jeevan Bima' by January 1, 2021 to help customers take informed decisions.
- The IIT Delhi and Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) partnered with each other to find technological solutions to the operational challenges faced by the organization.

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- The UNICEF and India's International Advertising Association (IAA India) has been collaborated with each other with an objective to boost the evidence and real time validation-based research on gender representation and stereotypes in TV and advertisements in India.
- Tata Motors has partnered with HDFC Bank for financing of its passenger vehicles.
- The Indian digital payment and technology platform Paytm has partnered with various card issuers to introduce co-branded cards in the market.
- Telangana government along with GlobalLinker has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).
- The JK Government signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with online store Flipkart to provide a platform for local artisans, craftsmen, weavers to reach customers across the globe.
- Stock exchange BSE has signed an agreement with Inventivepreneur Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI).
- World Bank has sanctioned around Rs.3 crore to set up India's first sand dune parks and interpretation centres in Goa.
- Mastercard, the payments technology company has partnered with Atlantis which is a Singapore-based financial technology company to boost the expansion of its Digital First Program in India.
- Indian Bank has collaborated with IIT-Madras Incubation Cell (IITMIC) to launch an initiative called 'IND Spring Board', for funding start-ups.
- Tata Communications was announced appointment of Kabir Ahmed Shakir as Chief Financial Officer with effect from October 21.
- Rohit Sharma has been signed up by India's leading beauty accessories brand, Vega, for its men's personal grooming electronics range under the 'Vega Men' brand.
- Former Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) of India, Bimal Julka, has been appointed as the new Chairman of Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS).
- India Post and US Postal Service signed agreement for electronic exchange of data related to postal shipments.
- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to share expertise for the betterment of highway infrastructure.
- Microsoft has collaborated with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to impart digital skills to more than one lakh underserved women in India over the next 10 months.
- As per the agreement, JBIC will provide 60 per cent of the loan amount and the balance will be extended by commercial banks namely Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, Bank of Yokohama, San-In Godo Bank, Joyo Bank and Nanto Bank, under the JBIC guarantee.
- State Bank of India on Wednesday said it has signed an agreement with Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for a loan worth USD 1 billion.
- Late Indian actor Om Puri was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the third edition of the India International Film Festival of Boston (IIFFB 2020).
- Digital India Award formerly known as Web Ratna Awards is an initiative to acknowledge the exemplary initiatives in e-Governance.
- Indian organisation named Global Himalayan Expedition wins UN Global Climate Action Award for combating climate change amid COVID-19 pandemic.
- The SBI Card in association with the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation launched a contactless multi-purpose card that can function as a credit card and as a metro smart card.
- SVC Bank (SVC Co-operative Bank Ltd.), one of the leading Co-operative Banks in the country, announced the launch of SVC Rewards Program.

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- The union cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding signed between India and Cambodia on cooperation in the field of medicine and health.
- The Union Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) signed between India and Japan on Cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technologies.
- India and United Arab Emirates recently held a webinar to boost defence production and exports between the countries.
- The Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd and Tech Mahindra signed a contract worth Rs 400 crore recently in Bengaluru for implementation of the Enterprise Resource Planning to support HAL's 'Project Parivartan'.
- Rachana Patil has been made new DM of Munger district while MS Dhillon became new SP of the district.
- India and Netherland Collaborated in E-Health Sector to give digital health facilities and security to Indians and help Netherlands to accelerate the digital transformation of health.
- Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting and business reengineering services and solutions has inked a contract of INR 400 crore for ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) implementation 'Project Parivartan' by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- The United Kingdom (UK) has entered into a strategic partnership to develop India's GIFT City.
- Tech Mahindra acquired 100% equity in two companies—Momenton, a digital enterprise technology firm and Tenzing Ltd.
- Private sector lender RBL Bank announced that the Reserve Bank of India has granted its approval to Maple Group to acquire up to a 9.99 percent stake in the bank

Ranks & Indices

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research, released the Second Sero Survey Report.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which is an Indian government agency responsible for collecting and analyzing crime data released the Crimes in India Report for the year of 2019.
- Department of Fertilizers under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers secured the 2nd position among the 16 Economic Ministries and also the department secured the 3rd spot out of the 65 Ministries or Departments.
- The Colombia-born American actress Sofia Vergara, who came to fame with an American TV Show 'Modern Family' is the highest paid actresses in the annual list of Forbes' Highest-Paid Actresses 2020.
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation conducted survey titled Time Use Survey.
- ICMR (The Indian Council of Medical Research) released the What India Eats Report.
- Ravi Santhanam, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), HDFC Bank has been recognised in the Forbes list of 'The World's Most Influential CMOs'.
- The World Water Development Report 2020 and PCRWR Groundwater Investigation and Mapping report released by the United Nations.
- NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) has released the report 'safest city for women' in India report.
- The Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani, has topped the Forbes India Rich list for 2020, released on 8th October 2020.
- The international charitable organisation 'Oxfam International' released a report on 2020 Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index.
- According to the Lancet Report, India is expected to be the third largest economy by 2050 and it overtakes China. India will retain the same position in 2100.
- The IIFL Wealth Hurun India 40 & under Self-Made Rich List 2020 announced.

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- The State of Climate Services Report 2020 is released by the United Nations World Meteorological Organization (UN WMO).
- As per the latest Arton Capital's World's Most Powerful Passport Index for the year 2020, Indian passport ranked at 58th and the US passport ranked 21st.
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released the State of Climate Services 2020 Report on October 13, 2020.
- Government of India (GoI) released Intellectual Property India annual report on October 15, 2020.
- Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020 report released on 16 October 2020 in which India has been ranked at 94 among 107 countries
- An Australian think tank the Lowy Institute released the Asia Power Index 2020.
- 44th edition of the annual International Migration Outlook report is released by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- The Global Hunger Index 2020 was released.
- The Ministry of Tourism released the Indian Tourism Statistics (ITS), 2020 report.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and UNICEF released the Anemia Mukht Bharat Index.
- The world economic forum recently released the third edition of the future of jobs report 2020.
- Forbes recently published World's Best Employer 2020 report which is topped by South Korea based Samsung Electronics.
- The Ookla Speedtest Global Index shows the data as of September 2020.
- The Indian Tourism Statistics (ITS), 2020, has announced that as many as 53.6 crore domestic tourists visited Uttar Pradesh in 2019.
- On 28 October 2020 the 'Electricity Access in India and Benchmarking Distribution Utilities' report was launched.
- NITI Aayog, Ministry of Power, Rockefeller Foundation and Smart Power India launched the 'Electricity Access in India and Benchmarking Distribution Utilities' report.
- The Public Affairs Index, 2020 was released by Public Affairs Centre, a non-profit organisation.
- The World Bank released the migration and development brief report.

Recent Committees

- SEBI has constituted a Market Data Advisory Committee (MDAC), a Standing Committee – to recommend appropriate policy for access to securities market data, identify segment wise data perimeters, data needs and gaps, recommend data privacy and data access regulations applicable to market data.
- The policy think tank NITI Aayog has constituted a 14-member advisory committee to look into introducing reforms in the urban planning education system.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has constituted a Market Data Advisory Committee (MDAC).

Web Portals & Apps

- DISHTAVO (Digital Integrated System for Holistic Teaching and Virtual Orientations), an online learning platform involving YouTube channel is launched by Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has launched an online discovery platform for startups called "Startup India Showcase".

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- Kisan Rath Mobile App launched by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to help farmers.
- The Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC) has recently announced the launch of the Skill Certification Assessment for Leather Employees (SCALE) India android app in order to provide a single platform to integrate quality assurance across all of its services.
- Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik Monday launched the electricity consumer service portal Mo Bidyut and Mobile App through video conference.
- Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri launched the Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) Portal(arhc.mohua.gov.in) under PM Awas Yojana via a webinar.
- Ministry of Union Housing and Urban Affairs has recently launched the 'e-Dharti Geo Portal'.
- Odisha Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik has launched two web portals named 'Odisha State Scholarship Portal' and 'Sumangal Portal'.
- Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao launched the web portal 'Dharani' for land and property registrations.

Books & Authors

- The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Dr Jitendra Singh released a Coffee Table Book on "Discovering the Heritage of Assam", written by Padampani Bora and having foreword by Amitabh Bachchan.
- The Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia released the book named "Bapu-The Unforgettable".
- Anand Neelakantan has authored his first kid's book titled "The Very, Extremely, Most Naughty Asura Tales for Kids".
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the autobiography of former Union Minister Dr Balasaheb Vikhe Patil through video conferencing on 13 October 2020.
- A former intelligence officer with the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), GBS Sidhu has written the book titled "The Khalistan Conspiracy".
- A handbook on "TB Harega, Desh Jeetega" is launched by the Nagaland Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Mr. S. Pangnyu Phom
- A new book titled "The Battle of Belonging: On Nationalism, Patriotism and What It Means To Be Indian" to be released by the Member of Parliament and author Shashi Tharoor.
- Pradeep Goorha, is all set for the release of his second book "Mr Prime Minister, We Shrank the Dragon".
- A book titled "On the Trails of Buddha: A Journey to the East" authored by Deepankar Aron, IRS Officer is released by the West Bengal Governor, Jagdeep Dhankar.
- Veteran economist and bureaucrat, and the current Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, NK Singh launched his autobiography, "Portraits of Power: Half A Century of Being at Ringside" in a virtual event on 19 October 2020.
- The book titled "Night of the Restless Spirits: Stories from 1984" authored by Sarbpreet Singh has been released recently.
- West Bengal Governor, Jagdeep Dhankar "On the Trails of Buddha: A Journey to the East" authored by Deepankar Aron, IRS Officer.

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Appointments

Name	Appointed as	Other Info
Anil Kumar Chaudhary	Head of CII's public sector enterprises council	
Rahul Parikh	Bandhan Bank Digital Head	
Dr Bushra Ateeq, Dr Surajit Ghosh and Dr Ravi Manjithaya	CSIR-Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) Award 2020	These scientists have made outstanding contribution in unfolding the knot of Cancer. Director, CDRI, Prof. Tapas Kundu and Ex Director, CDRI, Dr VP Kamboj congratulated the winners.
Sourav Ganguly	Brand ambassador for Bengal Peerless Housing	The former national cricket team captain and current president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Ganguly will primarily lead the campaign of the company's residential project Avidipta II on EM Bypass
Apurva Chandra	Secretary of Union Ministry of Labour & Employment.	Earlier he was serving as Special Director General, Defence Acquisition, Ministry of Defence.
Mohit Kapoor	Executive Vice-President and Group Chief Technology Officer of Mahindra Group	
BS Dhanoa	Independent director of Hero Motocorp	Dhanoa served as the Chief of the Indian Air Force from January 1, 2017 to September 30, 2019

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Charanjit Singh Attra	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of SBI	The post was lying vacant after the former Deputy MD & CFO Prashant Kumar, was appointed as the CEO of Yes Bank in March 2020
Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah	Ruling emir	Sheikh Nawaf, 83, had served as the crown prince since 2006, jumping a traditional order of alternating rule between the Al Jaber and the Al Salim branches of the country's ruling family.
Rinki Sethi	New Information Security Head Of Twitter	Sethi had previously worked as the vice president of information security at cyber-security firm Palo Alto Networks Inc.
Bhaskar Ghosh	Chief Strategy Officer of Accenture	Ghosh succeeds Simon Eaves
Dinesh Kumar Khara	Chairman of State Bank of India	Succeeds Khara
M Rajeshwar Rao	Deputy governor of RBI	He replaced NS Vishwanathan
M A Ganapathy	Director General of Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)	He will hold the position till his superannuation on February 29, 2024.
Arvind Hali	Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Motilal Oswal Home Finance Limited (MOHFL).	

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J Venkatramu	Managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of India Post Payments Bank	Venkatramu will take over the post of Suresh Sethi
Pradeep Kumar Rawat	Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Netherlands.	
Manoj Kumar	Chairman and managing director of Western Coalfields Ltd.	
Bhuvan Bam	first digital brand ambassador of Fashion e-commerce platform Myntra.	
Chaitanya Venkateswaran	British high commissioner to India for a day.	
Manikandan Thangarathnam	Mobility head of Uber in Bengaluru	
Sanjeev Krishan	Chairman of PwC in India	Sanjeev succeeds Shyamal Mukherjee
Constantina Dita	Ambassador for Half Marathon Championships Gdynia 2020	

JOKTA ACADEMY

Dr. Ekta Kapoor	Vice President of the OECD Working Group on GLP	
Rajkiran Rai G	Chairman of Indian Banks' Association (IBA)	He succeeds Rajnish Kumar
Michael Irani	Interim President of The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF)	
Vishal V. Sharma	India's next envoy to UNESCO	He succeeds Shri Jawed Ashraf
M K Das	Special Police Observer for Bye-Elections to Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh	
Seema Mustafa	President of the Editors Guild of India.	Mustafa succeeds Shekhar Gupta
Wavel Ramkalawan	President of Seychelles	
Lewis Hamilton	Ambassador of LG Signature	

JOKTA ACADEMY

Rajendra Prasad Goyal	CFO of NHPC Ltd.	
Priyanka Chopra Jonas	Brand Ambassador of Parle Agro	
Dr Neena Malhotra	Ambassador to the Republic of San Marino	Presently, she is serving as the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Italy.
B V R Subrahmanyam	Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Secretary	
Nanda Kishore Sahoo	Director General Dental Services and Colonel Commandant of Army Dental Corps	
Rajesh Nambiar	Cognizant India, CMD	
Rachana Patil	DM of Munger district	
MS Dhillon	SP of the Munger district	
Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha	New Chief Information Commissioner	

Awards & Honours

Name	Awarded as
Kerala Tourism	PATA Grand Award 2020 in Marketing
Sanjay Singh	'Gandhi' Award instituted by the Mahatma Gandhi National Foundation

JOKTA ACADEMY

Nasrin Sotoudeh of Iran, Bryan Stevenson of the United States (US), Lottie Cunningham Wren of Nicaragua and Ales Bialiatski of Belarus	Right Livelihood Award 2020.
Ratan Tata	Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) lifetime achievement award.
Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal	Global 'Covid Crusader Award-2020'
Nityanand Nayak	Sarala Puraskar for his poetry work 'Setebelaku Nathiba', published in 2017.
Sarah Hall	BBC national short story award
Indian Navy Ships Sahyadri and Kora	Best Ships in FAF 2020.
Bank of Ghana	Central bank of the year award 2020
Aishwarya Sridhar	Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award
Mangdechhu hydroelectric project in Bhutan	Prestigious Brunel Medal for excellence in civil engineering
Dr Jajini Varghese	Outstanding Young Person of the World 2020

2020 Nobel Prize in Physics

On 6th October, 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics announced by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Physics Winners List:

Person Name	Reason	Country
Roger Penrose	for the discovery that black hole formation is a robust prediction of the general theory of relativity	UK
Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez	For the discovery of a supermassive compact object at the centre of our galaxy	USA

2020 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

JOKTA ACADEMY

Person Name	Reason	Country
Harvey J Alter + Charles M Rice + Michael Houghton	for the discovery of the Hepatitis C virus.	

2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry:

Winner	Reason	Country
Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna	“for the development of a method for genome editing.”	France and America

2020 Nobel Prize in Literature

Winner	Reason	Country
Louise Glück	“for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal”	American

Nobel Peace Prize 2020

- The Norwegian Nobel Committee has awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 to World Food Programme (WFP) on **9th October 2020**.
- The 2020 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences has been awarded jointly to **Paul R. Milgrom and Robert B. Wilson** “for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats”

Important Days & Themes

Day	Celebrated as	Theme
October 1	International Day of Older Persons	This year is also marked as “Year of the Nurse and Midwife”
October 1	World Vegetarian Day	The full week between October 1–7 is observed as the International Vegetarian Week (IVW).
October 1	International Coffee Day	The theme 2020 of the day is “Coffee’s Next Generation”.

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October 1	World Postcard Day	The goal for the World Postcard Day is to bring that joy to as many people as possible.
October 2	World Day for Farmed Animals (WDFA)	The day is dedicated to exposing the needless suffering and death of farmed animals who are raised and slaughtered for food.
October 2	International Day of Non-Violence	The day aims to “spread the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness.
October month	breast cancer awareness month	WHO promotes comprehensive breast cancer control programmes as part of national cancer control plans.
October 4	World Animal Day	The day aims to raise the status of animals in order to improve welfare standards around the globe.
October 4-10	World Space Week (WSW)	The 2020 theme is “Satellites Improve Life.”
October 5	World Teachers’ Day, also known as International Teachers Day	The Theme for 2020 International Teachers Day is “Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”.
October 5 (1st Monday of October)	World Habitat Day	The theme for 2020 World Habitat Day is ‘Housing For All — A Better Urban Future’
October 1-8	Wildlife week	
October 5	‘Ganga River Dolphin Day’	
October 7	World Cotton Day	This day was initiated by the Group of Cotton-4 countries namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali to the reflect the importance of cotton as a global commodity.
October 8	Air Force day	

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October 9	World Post Day	To create awareness of the role of posts in everyday lives of the people.
second Thursday of October- October 8	World Sight Day	World Sight Day 2020 Theme: Hope In Sight
second Friday of October- October 9	World Egg Day	The theme for 2020 World Egg Day is "Eat your egg today and everyday"
October 10	World Mental Health day	The theme for World Mental Health Day 2020 is 'Mental Health for All'.
October 10	World Migratory day	The theme for World Migratory Bird Day 2020: Birds Connect Our World
October 10	National Post Day	
October 9-15	National Postal week	To generate awareness of the role and activities of the postal services among the public and media on a national scale.
October 5-11	World Investors week	
October 9	Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Day	
October 10	World Day Against the Death Penalty	The theme for 2020 is "Access to counsel – A matter of life or death."
October 11	International Day of the Girl Child	The theme for 2020 International Day of the Girl Child is "My voice, our equal future".
October 12	World Arthritis Day	The World Arthritis Day theme 2020 is Time2Work.
October 13	International Day for Disaster Reduction	
October 14	World Standards Day (WSD)	World Standards Day 2020 theme is "Protecting the planet with standards".
October 14	International E-Waste Day (IEWD)	The theme for 2020 IEWD is Education

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October 15	International Day of Rural Women	2020 Theme: "Rural women and girls building resilience"
October 15	Global Handwashing Day (GHD)	Theme of GHD 2020 is Hand Hygiene for All
October 15	World Students Day	This year marks the 89th birth anniversary of the former president and 'Missile Man' Dr APJ Abdul Kalam
October 16	World Food Day (WFD)	Theme 2020: "Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together"
October 16	World Anaesthesia Day	
October 17	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	Theme: 'Acting together to achieve social and environmental justice for all'
October 20	World Osteoporosis Day (WOD)	Global WOD Campaign theme is "THAT'S OSTEOPOROSIS".
October 20	World Statistics Day	The World Statistics Day 2020 theme "Connecting the world with data we can trust."
October 20	International Chefs Day	Theme of International Chefs Day 2020 campaign is Healthy Food for the Future.
October 20	National Deworming Day	
October 21	Police Commemoration Day	
October 22	International Stuttering Awareness Day	Theme 2020: "Journey of Words – Resilience and Bouncing Back"
October 23	International Snow Leopard Day	
October 24	International Day of Diplomats	
October 24	United Nations' World Development Information Day	
October 24	World Polio Day	The theme for 2020: "A win against polio is a win for global health."

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October 24	United Nations Day	
October 24	World Development Information Day	The theme of World Development Information Day 2020 is “Information and Communications Technologies — New Solutions to Development Challenges”.
October 27	World Day for Audiovisual Heritage	The theme of the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage 2020: “Your Window to the World”.
October 27, 2020 and November 2, 2020.	Vigilance Awareness Week	The conference is to be held under the theme: Vigilance Awareness Week
October 28	International Animation Day	to celebrate the art of animation and also recognise the artists, scientists and technicians behind animation.
October 29	World Psoriasis Day	“INFORMED”
October 29	World Stroke Day	
October 29	International Internet Day	
October 31	Rashtriya Ekta Diwas	
October 31	World Cities Day	Valuing our communities and cities.

Obituary

Name	Profession	Place
Helen Reddy	Singer	Melbourne, Australia
Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad-al Sabah	Ruler of Kuwait	Kuwait
KC Sivasankar	Chandamama Artist	Tamil Nadu

JOKTA ACADEMY

Haji Hussain Ansari	Jharkhand Minister	Jharkhand
Pradeep Maharathy	Former Odisha Minister and senior BJD MLA	Odisha
Mishti Mukherjee	Bollywood actress	West Bengal
Pushpa Bhawe	Veteran social activist	Maharashtra
Anant kumar Surendraray Dave	Former Acting Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court Justice	Gujarat
Mulayam Singh Yadav	Politician	Uttar Pradesh
Vishal Anand	Bollywood actor	Maharashtra
Najeeb Tarakai	Batsman	Afghanistan
M. Gopalakrishnan	Former chairman-cum-managing director of Indian Bank	Tamil Nadu
Prasanth Rajesh	Tamil Nadu Premier League Spinner	Tamil Nadu
Naseeb Pathan	Uttar Pradesh Congress leader	Uttar Pradesh
Ashwani Kumar	Former Governor of Manipur and Nagaland	
Eddie Van Halen	Guitar virtuoso	Amsterdam, Netherlands

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Ram Vilas Paswan	Former Union minister of consumer affairs, food and public distribution	Bihar
Mario Molina	Mexican scientist and a Nobel Prize receipt	Mexico
K K Usha	former Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court	Kerala
Avinash Kharshikar	Marathi actor	Maharashtra
Priscilla Jana	Indian-origin South African human rights lawyer	South Africa
CM Chang	Senior Nagaland Minister	Nagaland
Vinod Kumar Singh	Minister for Backward and Extremely Backward Classes in Bihar	Bihar
B. Vijaya Reddy	Kannada film-maker	Andhra Pradesh
Carlton Chapman	Former India football captain	Karnataka
Sarat Kumar Kar	Former speaker of Odisha Assembly and renowned writer	Odisha

JOKTA ACADEMY

Savithri Vaithi	Renowned philanthropist and social Worker	Tamil Nadu
Shobha Naidu	Kuchipudi dancer	Andhra Pradesh
Charlie Moore	Olympic champion	United States
John Richard Reid	Former New Zealand cricketer	New Zealand
Kishore Bhimani	Sports journalist and Cricket commentator	
Bhanu Athaiya	Costume designer	
Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri	Malayalam poet	Kerala
Kapil Deo Kamat	Politician	Bihar
Kaumudi Munshi	Gujarati singer	Gujarat
Pradip Ghosh	Bengali elocutionist	West Bengal
Puliyur Subramaniam Narayanaswamy	Carnatic Vocalist	
Lee Kun-Hee	Samsung Group Chairman	
Zarina Roshan Khan	Actress	
Naresh Kanodia	Gujarati film musician, singer and former Parliamentarian	Gujarat
K J Mohammed Babu	Malayalam playback singer, music director and actor	Kerala

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Dr. Jayanta Madhab	Assamese economist	Assam
Dr Vijayalakshmi Ramanan	first woman officer Wing Commander (Retd)	
Jashomatinandan Das Ji	President of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple	
Keshubhai Savdasbhai Patel	Politician	Gujarat
Daniel Menaker	Author	

States Miscellaneous

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched the YSR Jala Kala Scheme under which free borewells will be drilled for the needy farmers in the state.
- The Maharashtra government has banned the sale of loose cigarettes and beedis, making it the first Indian state to do so.
- Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis has been appointed as the party's Bihar Assembly Elections in-charge.
- Gujarat Government has announced 25 percent cut in school fees for the current academic year.
- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy along with Union Ministers launched the door delivery of fertilisers to farmers, PoS (Point of sale) version, and SMS gateway from Rythu Bharosa Kendras.
- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched a slum upgradation programme to make the state slum free in three years.
- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched a web portal named 'Kritagyata' on 1st October 2020.
- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has launched a new scheme called the Pathashree Abhijan on 01 October 2020.
- Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad has launched 'Radio Prison' on the occasion of the 151st Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation.
- On the occasion of World Postcard Day, the Chief Postmaster General, Odisha Circle, has released a picture postcard named "Jau Kandhei" on the theme of 'Traditional Toys of India'.
- A 20-bed tribal unit of the National Institute of Naturopathy was inaugurated in Pune's Ambegaon tehsil by Union AYUSH minister Shripad Naik.
- Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar digitally launched 'Gram Darshan', which will allow accessibility to data of development projects of 6,197 gram panchayats of the state.
- Chhattisgarh State Government has organised Corona Intensive Community Survey Campaign.
- Union Minister for Railways Shri, Piyush Goyal inaugurated Phoolbagan Metro station of East-West Metro.

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- the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched a Mega Anti-Pollution Campaign, called “Yudh Prasudushan ke Virudh”.
- The Union department of Industry promotion and internal trade has given the GI Tag recently to the “Dalle Khursani” the famous chilli of Sikkim.
- The Goa government released an action plan to support agriculture and animal husbandry under its “Aatmanirbhar” programme.
- Digital Seva Setu Programme for rural areas has been initiated by Gujarat government under the Bharat Net Project.
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal renamed Naugarh railway station to Siddharthnagar railway station which is situated at Siddharthnagar district in Uttar Pradesh.
- Uttar Pradesh government will launch a special campaign on the safety of women and girls during the Navratri festival.
- Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani e-dedicated online e-Sanjeevani OPDs scheme across Gujarat through videoconferencing.
- The Gyan Circle Ventures, a MeitY funded Technology Business Incubator (TBI) of Indian Institute of Information Technology, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh is inaugurated by the Union Minister for Education Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’.
- The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched Jagan Anna Vidya kanuka scheme.
- Mukhyamantri Saur Swarojgar Yojana recently launched by the Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat which will promote self-employment of the youth. It also promotes production of green energy.
- Goa has become the first state in India to provide 100% tap water connections in rural areas under “Har Ghar Jal State”.
- Delhi government announced that the city restaurants will now be allowed to open round the clock and the requirement of tourism licenses will also be removed.
- With an aim to preserve trees for clean and green city, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has passed a first-of-its-kind in India ‘Tree Transplantation Policy’.
- “Swa-nirbhar Naari:Atmanirbhar Asom” scheme is launched by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated 44 bridges and laid the foundation stone of Nechiphu tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh will invite private investors to work on the establishment of forest-based domestic industries.
- Manoj Sinha the Lieutenant Governor of J&K, inaugurated sports infrastructure worth Rs. 49.78 crore and laid foundation of various projects costing Rs. 10.5 Crore across the Union Territory in a function held at Pologround in Srinagar.
- The chief Justice of Madras High court shri. A.P Sahi inaugurated the Integrated court complex in Karaikal.
- The State of Kerala is the first state in the country to make public education completely digital.
- Anation-wide campaign started by the Rashtriya Kamadhenu Aayog (RKA) named “Kamadhenu Deepawali Abhiyan”.
- A toll-free government helpline for mental health” Mann Samvad” was launched by Health Minister Raghu Sharma in Rajasthan.
- The Goa Agriculture department has collaborated with the Postal Department to enroll 11,000 farmers, eligible to avail the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN), under which small and marginal farmers get up to Rs 6,000 per year as minimum income support.

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- To determine the quality of potable water a state-of-the-art-Mobile-Water Testing Laboratory Van of Rs 99- lakh is launched by Haryana Chief Minister (CM) Manohar Lal Khattar.
- The newly formed Trichy Circle of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) will soon launch a cultural campaign to make youth aware of the country's national heritage.
- The Uttar Pradesh government has launched "Mission Shakti" program which will be dedicated to the coming Navratra festival for women's safety, dignity and empowerment.
- Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Edappadi K. Palaniswami signed 14 Agreements worth Rs. 10, 055 crore with potential to generate employment in the State.
- PepsiCo, which is an American multinational food, snack and beverage corporation has planned to establish potato chips in Uttar Pradesh with Rs 814 crore investment.
- On 13th October, "Sujal"- 'Drink from Tap Mission' scheme is launched by Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik.
- The Tribal Affairs Ministry has launched an initiative named 'Tech for Tribals' with an aim to focus on imparting entrepreneurship and business skills to tribals in Chhattisgarh.
- Kerala Karshaka Kshemanidhi Board has been launched by Kerala State Government for Welfare of Farmers in the State.
- The Memorandum of Understanding for this project was signed with Vedanta Group this evening.
- In J&K, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, Dr. Jyoti Madhavi and Additional Superintendent of Police, Ramban, Rajni Sharma inaugurated a "SAKHI" One-Stop Service Centre for women in Ramban district.
- The new integrated passenger terminal building of AAI-run Trichy airport in Tamil Nadu, with enhanced passenger handling capacity, will be functional from March 2022.
- Rs 520 crore a special package approved by the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi for J&K and Ladakh under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).
- Chief Minister of Delhi, Shri Arvind Kejriwal launched 'Red light on, Gaadi off' campaign to fight air pollution.
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered to establish women help desks in each and every police station of state.
- With an aim to give the awareness of sanitation practices "hath dhona, roke corona" campaign on the occasion of Global Handwashing Day of launched by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.
- Karnataka State Government has launched My Family, My Responsibility campaign in Udupi District.
- Country's First International Institute of Advanced Virology inaugurated in Kerala.
- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari will virtually lay the foundation stone for the first-ever multi-modal logistic park of the country in Assam.
- Assam celebrated the Kati Bihu festival Locals in Bongaigaon celebrated in Assam.
- The Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel inaugurated the 'Safe City Project' on 19 October 2020 in Lucknow.
- The Indian farmers fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) joint venture Sikkim IFFCO Organics Limited recently has started the construction work of food processing units in Sikkim.
- Atma-Nirbhar Bharat Training Center has been started in the state of Madhya Pradesh.
- Maharashtra has become the first state in the country to cap the prices of masks.
- Kerala's first water taxi service launched in the backwaters of Alappuzha. The water taxi is set to ferry passengers.
- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the 3rd World Statistics Day on the theme 'Connecting the world with Data we can Trust' was celebrated in Budgam.

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- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal laid the foundation stone of Assam Agar International Trade Centre at Golaghat.
- Uttar Pradesh Government has announced to provide financial assistance to labourers for historical and religious tour in a unique step towards welfare of the labourers in state.
- The Tamil Nadu State government is to implement the smart blackboard scheme in more than 80,000 Government schools.
- The Integrated Model Agricultural Village scheme (Ekikrit Adarsh Krishi Gram Yojana) launched by the Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.
- The Union Ministry of Rural Development has declared the list of tops performing 30 districts in the country for implementing the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
- 'YSR Bima' scheme is launched by Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy with an aim to provide financial assistance through insurance cover to beneficiary in case of death or accident of their families members.
- The Asan Conservation Reserve in Uttarakhand has become the first Ramsar site in the state, giving it the status of 'Wetland of International Importance'.
- In Mizoram, the state government has decided to observe 'COVID-19 – No Tolerance Fortnight' beginning from 26th October as a containment measure to flatten the curve of Covid-19 in the state.
- To keep a check on the declining numbers of elephants in the state, the West Bengal government launched marketing campaign to prevent deaths of elephants from electrocution.
- Tamil Nadu government is implementing the Smart Black Board scheme in 80,000 government schools to ensure better teaching environment.
- The air quality in Delhi was recorded in the very poor category.
- Uttar Pradesh Government has decided to establish anti-human trafficking Police Stations in each and every district in a major step towards the security of women and children.
- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari will lay the foundation stones of nine National Highway projects in Tripura.
- Every year, October 27 is celebrated as Infantry Day by the Indian Army in Jammu & Kashmir (known by nickname, Chinar Corps).
- The phase-II of Rs. 11,000 crore Urban Environment Improvement Programme (UIEP) is virtually launched by the Chief Minister of Punjab, Amarinder Singh.
- To transform the functioning of the Panchayati raj bodies of Jammu and Kashmir, the government is all set to provide digital infrastructure with internet connectivity to all halqa panchayats and Block Development Councils (BDCs).
- In Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha virtually inaugurated Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre (IPFC) at Jammu and Sub-Centre at Srinagar.
- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu said that music and dance can provide relief from the anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Punjab Sports and NRI Affairs Minister, Shri Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi launched Punjabi version of 'Age Appropriate Fitness Protocols'
- The Young Advocates Welfare Fund has been launched in Tamil Nadu.
- Kerala became the first Indian state to fix Minimum Support Price for sixteen agriculture items.
- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched the Green Delhi mobile application today, on October 29, 2020.
- The Centre has allocated the first tranche of more than Rs. one crore for the paperless project of Odisha Vidhansabha.

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- The state government of Karnataka has proposed a ban on government servants acting in films and television programmes.
- Union Territory of Ladakh is celebrating its first raising day.
- Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu will get a vulture conservation and breeding centre each, according to the Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2020-2025.
- The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has partnered with Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Delhi, JATC (Joint Advanced Technology Centre) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

