



# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**FEBRUARY**

**01ST - 28TH FEB**

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# NATIONAL AFFAIRS

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## PM AATMA NIRBHAR SWASTH BHARAT YOJANA

- ❖ **Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** announced two new central sponsorship plans, namely **Prime Minister Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana** and **Mission Poshan 2.0** while announcing the alliance budget for 2021.



- ❖ According to the announcement, a new central sponsorship program will be launched called **PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana**
- ❖ **PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana:** In addition, the expenditure of Rs. Prime Minister **Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana** announced Rs 661.8 billion, which is more than 6 years old.
- ❖ This was announced in addition to the **National Health Mission (NHM)**. **PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana** includes the following interventions:
- ❖ **Mission Pushan 2.0 will be launched**, with the goal of improving nutrient content, provision, extension and results. The plan will merge the slope mountain Abidjan and the supplementary nutrition plan.
- ❖ **The mission is to improve nutritional outcomes in 112 Aspirational Districts.** Aspirational Districts are those areas that are affected by poor socioeconomic indicators in India.
- ❖ These areas are ambitious, because if any improvement is made in these areas, it may lead to an **overall improvement in human development in India.**

## INDIA'S FIRST CENTRE FOR WETLAND CONSERVATION

- ❖ A **dedicated Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM)** has been established at the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai, an institution under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.



- ❖ This was announced by **Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Babul Supriyo** on the occasion of the World Wetland Day on 2nd February 2021.
- ❖ The **dedicated CWCM Centre** would address specific research needs and knowledge gaps, give a fillip to capacity development and cutting-edge research on wetlands of India, as well as aid in the application of integrated approaches for conservation, management and wise use of the wetlands.

## EDUCATION MINISTER LAUNCHED ASEAN-INDIA HACKATHON

- ❖ The **Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'** has addressed the inaugural ceremony of the **ASEAN India Hackathon 2021** on February 1. The Ministry of Education has launched the ASEAN India Hackathon 2021.



- ❖ The **ASEAN India Hackathon 2021** is being conducted virtually from February 1 to 3, 2021. The 10 ASEAN countries are- Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Brunei, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.
- ❖ The **ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon is an initiative by PM Modi** and is launched by the Ministry of Education. This **unique hackathon presents opportunities for India and**

**all the 10 ASEAN countries** to improve and strengthen their economic and cultural ties through cooperation in science and technology and education.

## ARVIND KEJRIWAL LAUNCHED 'SWITCH DELHI' CAMPAIGN

- ❖ Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal has launched the ‘Switch Delhi’ campaign to promote **electric vehicles** and appealed to people to buy such vehicles to **combat pollution in the city**.



- ❖ Kejriwal said his government will hire **only electric vehicles** for various purposes in the next six weeks. In the ‘Switch Delhi’ campaign, awareness will be created about the benefits of electric vehicles and how it can contribute to making **Delhi clean and pollution-free**.
- ❖ Under its electric vehicle policy, the Delhi government has planned **extensive subsidies** on purchase of electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers, besides **waiving road tax and registration charges**.

## COMMENCEMENT OF MILITARY EXERCISE 'YUDH ABHYAS'

- ❖ The **India-US joint military exercise “Yudh Abhyas 20”** commenced in **Mahajan Field Firing Range** of Bikaner district in Rajasthan.



- ❖ This is the **16th edition** of an annual bilateral joint exercise of both the armies. It will continue till the 21st of this month.
- ❖ The previous version of the joint exercise was held at **Seattle in the United States**. This exercise is another step in the growing military cooperation between the two countries, which shows the growth in **Indo-US relations**. The exercise is one of the largest military training and defence cooperation efforts between India and the United States.

## PM MODI LAUNCHES ASOM MALA IN ASSAM

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the **‘Asom Mala’ programme in Dhekiajuli of Sonitpur district, Assam**. As per the PMO, this initiative will boost the state’s **road infrastructure** and contribute to Assam’s economic progress and improve connectivity.



- ❖ The programme is unique for its emphasis on effective maintenance through continuous field data collection and its linkage with the **Road Asset Management System**. PM Modi also laid the foundation stones of **medical colleges and hospitals in Biswanath and Charaideo** with an aim to boost Assam’s health infrastructure.
- ❖ The two medical colleges and hospitals are being set up at Biswanath and Charaideo at a total estimated project cost of over Rs 1,100 crores. Each hospital will have a 500-bed capacity and 100 MBBS seat capacity.

## UP INTRODUCED UNIQUE 16-DIGIT UNICODE

- ❖ **Uttar Pradesh government** has introduced a system of issuing a **unique 16-digit Unicode** to mark all kinds of landholdings in the state.



- ❖ The **main purpose** of the system is to **check the cases of land disputes**, put an end to fake registries of the disputed land and save people from falling into the trap of fraudsters.
- ❖ Every **piece of land in the state will have its own unique identity**. The Unicode would be issued by the state revenue department for marking all kinds of agricultural, residential and commercial land.

## INDIA & AFGHANISTAN AGREEMENT ON SHATOOT DAM

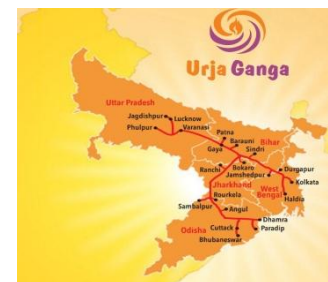
- ❖ **India and Afghanistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding MoU** over video-teleconferencing (VTC), for the construction of the **Shahtoot Dam (Lalander Dam)** on a tributary of the Kabul river in Afghanistan.



- ❖ The project, **which costs nearly \$ 300 million**, is a part of the New Development Partnership between **India and Afghanistan**.
- ❖ The MoU was signed between **External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar and Afghanistan Foreign Minister Mr Hanif Atmar**, in the presence of Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Afghanistan President Dr Mohammad Ashraf Ghani.
- ❖ The **Lalander [Shatoot] Dam** would meet the safe drinking water needs of Kabul City, provide irrigation water to nearby areas, rehabilitate the **existing irrigation and drainage network**, aid in flood protection and management efforts in the area, and also provide electricity to the region.

## PRADHAN MANTRI URJA GANGA PROJECT

- ❖ PM is responsible for the 348 km **Dobhi-Durgapur Natural Gas Pipeline section** across the country, which is part of the **Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project**.
- ❖ This is a **natural gas pipeline project** that aims to provide cooking gas to people. It was **launched in Varanasi in 2016** and later expanded to people in the states of **Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand**.





- ❖ The government is actively connecting the **eastern states with the national gas grid**. The **total length of the pipeline under the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project** is approximately 3,384 kilometers, of which 766 kilometers of pipelines are located in Orissa, and the remaining 2,618 kilometers are located in **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Assam**.

## J&K REORGANISATION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2021

- ❖ Rajya Sabha passed the **“Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Amendment) Act 2021”** on February 8, 2021 by voice vote.
- ❖ The bill seeks to replace the decree to merge the cadres of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the civil servants of **Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, and Mizoram Confederate Territories (AGMUT)**.
- ❖ After **Article 370** of the region was revoked, the **"Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Amendment) Act 2021"** was passed and the **"Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act"** was promulgated in 2019.



## 'JALABHISHEKAM CAMPAIGN' LAUNCHED IN MP

- ❖ The **state government of Madhya Pradesh** has launched a water conservation campaign called **‘Jalabhishekam’**, under which more than 57,000 water structures has been constructed.
- ❖ The campaign was inaugurated by the **Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** virtually.
- ❖ Water conservation work is being undertaken with public participation and will be helpful in achieving the goal of **building self-reliant Madhya Pradesh**. The Campaign



will also fulfil the intention of ‘**water for every farm and work for every hand**’. The water structures were created during COVID era by linking the work with the **MNREGA scheme**.

## PM MODI DEDICATED ARJUN MK-1A TO ARMY

- ❖ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has handed over the indigenous main **battle tank Arjun Mk-1A** to the Army in a function at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai**.



- ❖ **Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane** received the model of the tank, designed and developed by Chennai-based **Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE)**, a unit of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).
- ❖ **A tank made in Tamil Nadu** will be used in our northern borders to keep the nation safe.

## WORLD BANK SIGNS 100 MILLION USD FOR CHIRAAG

- ❖ Indian Govt and Chhattisgarh Govt has signed a \$100 million for **CHIRAAG (Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth)** project with the World bank.



- ❖ The main purpose is to **develop sustainable production systems** that allow tribal households in remote areas of Chhattisgarh to practice round-the-year production of diversified and nutritious food.
- ❖ The **project will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region** of the state where a large population is undernourished and poor.

## INDIA JOINS IRAN AND RUSSIA IN MARITIME SECURITY

❖ **India joined Iran and Russia** in the naval exercise dubbed as “**Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021**”, which kicked-off in the northern part of the Indian Ocean.



❖ The **Chinese navy** will also join the exercise. The **purpose of the drill** is to enhance the security of international maritime trade, confront maritime piracy and terrorism, and exchange information.

❖ The **drill will cover an area of 17,000 square kilometres** (6,500 square miles). It will include shooting at sea and air targets and liberating hijacked ships, as well as search and rescue and anti-piracy operations. The **exercise ‘Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt’** is so flexible that any country could join if they wish to do so.

## KIRAN BEDI REMOVED AS LT. GOVERNOR OF PUDUCHERRY

❖ Kiran Bedi, the **Lieutenant-Governor of Puducherry**, has been removed from the top position.



❖ **Tamilisai Soundararajan**, the Governor of Telangana, has been given additional charge as the **Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry** till a permanent replacement will be announced.

❖ The development comes in the backdrop of a major shake-up in the **Puducherry Assembly after several Congress legislators** resigned ahead of the Assembly elections due this year.

## PM MODI TO CHAIR NITI AAYOG COUNCIL MEETING

- ❖ **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will chair the **NITI Aayog Council meeting** on February 20, 2021. During this meeting, problems related to **agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure and human resource development** will be discussed. This will be the 6th meeting of the Council.



- ❖ The **newly added UT Ladakh will attend the meeting for the first time**. Jammu and Kashmir will also participate as joint territories this year. Other Union territories led by the administrator will also join the conference.
- ❖ **Ex-officio members of the council will also attend the meeting**; the vice-chairman and union minister. The member and **CEO of NITI Aayog** and other senior officials of the Indian government will also attend the meeting.

## SAARC VIRTUAL MEETING TO BE HOSTED BY INDIA

- ❖ India hold a virtual **health secretary-level meeting with the member** states of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**.
- ❖ The virtual conference held on February 18, 2021. During the meeting, members discussed the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. **Pakistan was also invited to participate in the meeting.**
- ❖ The virtual conference discusses **challenges and developments related to COVID-19 management and pandemic response**. Members exchanges best practices on the ongoing pandemic. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also raised the **Coronavirus Emergency Fund COVID-19 crisis**.



- ❖ The purpose of establishing the emergency fund is to reduce the risks associated with the **COVID-19 pandemic in South Asia.**

## CABINET APPROVES PLI SCHEME FOR TELECOM SECTOR

- ❖ The **Union Cabinet approved a Rs 12,195-crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** for domestic manufacturing of telecom and networking products such as switches, routers, radio access network, wireless equipment and other IoT access devices.



- ❖ Through this decision, the government aims to offset the imports of telecom equipment worth more than **Rs 50,000 crore and reinforce it with “Made in India”** products both for domestic markets and exports.
- ❖ The support under the PLI scheme will be provided to companies manufacturers of specified telecom and networking products in India like **Gigabit Passive Optical Networks (GPON)**, base routers, **Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM)**, Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS/ IPMPLS) and 5G/4G radios.
- ❖ The government will soon come up with a PLI scheme to encourage the production of **laptops and tablet PCs.**

## PM ADDRESSED 2ND KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

- ❖ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has delivered the inaugural address at the **2nd Khelo India National Winter Games** through a video conference.



- ❖ The **second edition of the Khelo India-Winter Games** has been organised at the world-famous ski-resort Gulmarg in the **Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- ❖ The event has been organised by the **Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council and the Winter Games Association of J&K. The sports activities at the games will include **alpine skiing, nordic ski, snowboarding, ski mountaineering, ice hockey, ice skating, ice stock etc.**

## PM MODI TO INAUGURATE 2ND MARITIME SUMMIT

- ❖ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will inaugurate the virtual **Maritime India Summit (MIS) 2021**, from March 2 to 4, 2021.



- ❖ The ‘**Maritime India Summit 2021**’ is the flagship initiative of the **Union Ministry of State for Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW)**, Government of India. **FICCI** is the industry partner for the summit.
- ❖ The theme of the event is “Exploring the potential business opportunities in the Indian Maritime sector and making **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**”. The **objective of the Summit is to promote both domestic and international investment** in the Indian Ports and Maritime sector.

## GOI & WORLD BANK INK PACT FOR PROJECTS IN NAGALAND

- ❖ The **Government of India, the Government of Nagaland and the World Bank** signed a \$68 million agreement for “Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project”, to enhance the governance of schools across Nagaland.



- ❖ The **\$68 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**, has a final maturity of 14.5 years including a grace period of 5 (five) years.
- ❖ The “**Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project**” will improve classroom instruction; create opportunities for the professional development of teachers, and build technology systems to provide students and teachers with more access to blended and online learning as well as allow better monitoring of policies and programmes.

## INDIA & MALDIVES SIGNED PACTS TO BOOST INFRASTRUCTURE

- ❖ **External Affairs Minister (EAM), S. Jaishankar** was on a two-day official visit to the archipelago nation the Maldives to review bilateral ties and development cooperation.



- ❖ Apart from this, five pacts were signed between **India and Maldives to boost infrastructure in the island nation**. They included:
  - Amendatory Agreement to repurpose an older **EXIM Bank of India Line of Credit of USD 25 million for Road Devt.**
  - **Letter of Intent between EXIM Bank and local authorities** for financing a housing project of 2000 units in Hulhumale.
  - MoU on grant **funding USD 0.5 million for a fish processing plant** in Kendhikulhudhoo in the northern Maldives.

## INAUGURATION OF ATAL PARYAVARAN BHAVAN

❖ The **Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar**, inaugurated the **Atal Paryavaran Bhavan at Lakshadweep**. Prakash Javadekar is on a four-day official visit to Lakshadweep from February 19 to 22, 2021.



❖ During the visit, the minister attended high-level meetings with the Secretaries of various departments in the Lakshadweep administration, participated in various official **programmes at Suheli, Kadmat and Bangaram islands**.

❖ The minister will also evaluate the major innovative initiatives of the **Union Territory's Forest and Environment Department**, so that Lakshadweep undergoes comprehensive development, without compromising its commitment to nature.

## CM OF PUDUCHERRY V. NARAYANASAMY RESIGNED

❖ The Chief Minister of the **Union Territory of Puducherry, V Narayanasamy** has submitted the letter of his resignation and his council of ministers on February 22, 2021, to **Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan**.



❖ The decision was taken as the Congress-led Government in the UT lost its majority in the House, which are 14.

❖ Following a series of resignations, the ruling government was reduced to strength of 12. Two MLA resigned in January 2021 while 2 resigned in February 2021.

## HARSH VARDHAN INAUGURATED MISSION INDRADHANUSH 3.0



- ❖ Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan has launched the Intensified **Mission Indradhanush 3.0**, (IMI 3.0), to expand immunization coverage across the country.



- ❖ The focus of IMI 3.0 will be on **children and pregnant women** who missed their vaccine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The IMI 3.0 will have two rounds, of 15 days each. The first round will begin on February 22, 2021, and the second round will begin on March 22, 2021.
- ❖ The vaccination drive will be conducted in pre-identified 250 districts and urban areas across **29 States and UTs in the country to reach out to every dropped out and left out the child and pregnant woman.**

## RAJNATH SINGH INAUGURATED 26TH HUNAR HAAT

- ❖ **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** has inaugurated the **26th edition of 'Hunar Haat'** in New Delhi.



- ❖ The “Hunar Haat” will be held from February 21 to March 01, 2021, **with the theme of “Vocal for Local”**. More than 600 artisans and craftsmen from more than 31 states and UTs are participating.
- ❖ Through Hunar Haat, the **Union Ministry of Minority Affairs** aims to provide employment and employment opportunities to 7,50,000 artisans by organising **75 Hunar Haats by 2022**, when India will celebrate its 75 years of Independence.

## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

## WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2021

Recently, the **World Sustainable Development Summit**, the annual flagship event of **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)** was held. The theme of the 2021 Summit was **‘Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all’**. TERI is a non-profit research institute, established in



1974. It conducts research work in the **fields of energy, environment and sustainable development for India and the Global South**. The event was attended by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar; President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana H.E. Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali; Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Honourable James Marape; Speaker of the People’s Majlis, Republic of Maldives Mohamed Nasheed and Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations Amina J Mohammed. The **World Sustainable Development Summit** will bring together a wide number of business leaders, governments, climate scientists, academicians, youth, and civil society in the fight against climate change. The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Earth Sciences** are the key partners of the Sustainable Development Summit.

## PM MODI AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE SUMMIT

**Prime Minister Modi** at the inauguration of the **World Sustainable Development Summit 2021** highlighted that global platforms like this are significant for our present and for the future. He added that two things that will define how the progress journey of humanity will unfold. First will be the health of the people and second will be the health of the planet. Global platforms like this are important for our present & our future. 2 things will **define how progress journey of humanity** will unfold in times to come. **1st, health of our people. 2nd, health of our planet.** Both are inter-linked. While highlighting the health of the planet, **Prime Minister** mentioned that there have already been many discussions on the health of the people but today we have gathered here to talk and discuss the health of the planet.

There are already many ongoing discussions on improving people's health. We have gathered here to talk about the health of the planet. **PM Modi** in his address talked about climate change and mentioned that the road to fight this is **only through Climate Justice** and at the root of climate justice is the principle of being large-hearted. He added that **Climate Justice is thinking about the bigger and long-term picture.**

The road to **fighting climate change is through climate justice.** At the root of climate justice is the principle of being large-hearted. Climate justice is also about thinking of the bigger and long-term picture. Mentioning the impact of environmental changes and natural disasters on the poor, **PM Modi explained that Climate Justice** is inspired by the vision of trusteeship where the growth will come only with the greater compassion to the poorest. The sad reality is, changes in the environment & natural disasters impact the poor the most. **Climate justice is inspired by a vision of trusteeship** where growth comes with greater compassion to the poorest. According to **PM Modi, Climate Justice** also means giving developing countries enough space to grow. When each and every one of us will understand our **collective and individual duties, Climate Justice will be achieved.** Climate justice also means giving developing countries enough space to grow. When each and every one of us understand our individual and collective duties, climate justice will be achieved: **PM Narendra Modi at World Sustainable Development Summit 2021**

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMIT

**Emphasis on Climate Justice:** “Climate justice” is a term and more than that a movement that acknowledges climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations. As per **India, ‘climate justice’ is inspired by a vision of trusteeship** - where growth comes with greater compassion to the poorest. It also means giving the developing countries enough space to grow.

**Reassurance to Climate Mitigation Efforts:** India reassured commitments to its targets under the Paris deal to reduce emissions intensity of **GDP by 33 to 35 percent from 2005 levels.** India’s steady progress on its commitment to Land Degradation Neutrality and setting up of **450**

**gigawatts of Renewable Energy generating capacity till 2030** was also highlighted. Initiatives of India under International Solar Alliance were also discussed.

*Commitment to Enhancing Disaster Resilience:* To enhance India's disaster management capabilities, commitments to **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** were assured.

*CDRI:* A multi-stakeholder global partnership of country governments, **UN agencies, multilateral banks, private sector** and knowledge institutions that aims to build resilience into infrastructure systems to **ensure sustainable development**.

*India's Efforts Towards Sustainable Development:* In March 2019, India achieved nearly **100% electrification** through sustainable technologies and innovative models. Through the **Ujala Programme, 367 million LED bulbs** were distributed which reduced over 38 million tonnes carbon dioxide per year. Through the **PM Ujjwala Yojna**, more than 80 million households below the poverty line have access to clean cooking fuel. India is working to increase the share of natural gas in **India's energy basket from 6% to 15%**.

**The Jal Jeevan Mission** has connected over 34 million households with tap connections in 18 months. Through conservation efforts, the population of lions, tigers, leopards and Gangetic river dolphins has gone up.

## BACKGROUND OF THE SUMMIT

The **World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)** is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). It was earlier known as **Delhi Sustainable Development Summit**. It has been conceptualized as a single platform to accelerate action towards sustainable development and climate change. It aims to bring together global leaders and thinkers in the fields of sustainable development, energy and environment sectors on a common platform.

**Post the signing of the Paris Agreement** and the adoption of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, the summit aims at providing long-term solutions for the benefits of the global

community by bringing together various stakeholders on a single platform and taking a step in a direction of achieving constructive action in **combating issues that are significant to the future of humanity**.

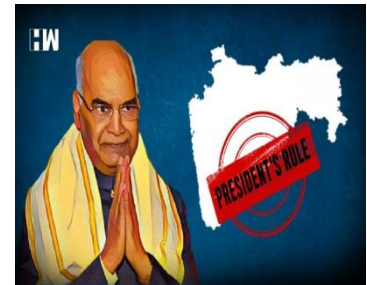
**Sustainable Development:** "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This most widely accepted definition of **Sustainable Development** was given by the Brundtland Commission in its report '**Our Common Future**' (1987).

**Climate Change:** It is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define **Earth's local, regional and global climates**.

Climate data records provide evidence of climate change key indicators, such as global land and ocean temperature increases; rising sea levels; ice loss at Earth's poles and in mountain glaciers; frequency and severity changes in extreme weather such as **hurricanes, heatwaves, wildfires, droughts**, floods and precipitation; and cloud and vegetation cover changes, **to name but a few**.

## PRESIDENT RULE IMPOSED IN PUDUCHERRY

**President's Rule** has been **imposed in the Union Territory of Puducherry**, on the recommendation of the **Lieutenant Governor**, after the established government lost power during a vote of confidence. The President was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which the administration of the Union Territory of Puducherry could not carry on in accordance with the provisions of the **Government of Union Territories Act, 1963**. The **Government of Union Territories Act, 1963** enacted by the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of **article 239A**.



## ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNION TERRITORIES

**Article 239 to 242 under Part VIII of the Indian Constitution** deals with the administration of Union Territories. Every union territory is administered by the **President acting through an administrator appointed by him**. An administrator of a union territory is an agent of the

President and not head of state like a governor. The President can specify the designation of an administrator; it may be Lieutenant Governor or Chief Commissioner or Administrator. **The Union Territories of Puducherry (in 1963), Delhi (in 1992) and Jammu and Kashmir (in 2019)** are provided with a legislative assembly and a council of ministers headed by a chief minister. But, the establishment of such institutions in the union territories does not diminish the supreme control of the President and Parliament over them. The Parliament can make laws on **any subject of the three lists (including the State List) for the union territories.**

*Provision in Case of Failure of Constitutional Machinery (as per the 1963 Act):* If the President, on receipt of a report from the Administrator of (the Union territory) or otherwise, is satisfied— that a situation has arisen in which the administration of the Union territory cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Act, or that for the proper administration of the Union territory it is necessary or expedient so to do, **The President may, by order, suspend the operation of all or any of the provisions of this Act** for such period as he thinks fit, and Make such incidental and consequential provisions as may appear to him to be necessary or expedient for administering the Union territory in accordance with the **provisions of Article 239.**

## **PRESIDENT'S RULE IMPOSED IN A STATE**

**President's Rule implies the suspension of a state government** and the imposition of direct rule of the Centre. It is also known as '**State Emergency**' or '**Constitutional Emergency**'. The President's Rule is imposed through the invocation of **Article 356 of the Constitution** by the President on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers. **Under Article 356, President's Rule is imposed if** the President, upon receipt of the report from the Governor of the State or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

*Parliamentary Approval and Duration:* A proclamation **imposing President's Rule** must be approved by both the Houses of Parliament within two months from the date of its issue. The approval takes place through simple majority in either House, that is, a majority of the members of the House present and voting. Initially valid for six months, the President's Rule can be

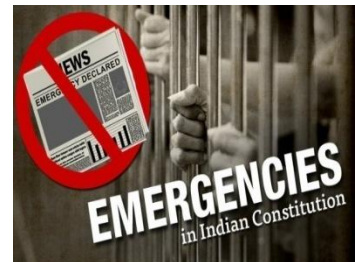
extended for a maximum period of **three years with the approval of the Parliament, every six months.**

**Consequences of President's Rule:** The state governor, on **behalf of the President**, carries on the state administration with the help of the chief secretary of the state or the advisors appointed by the President. The President can declare that the powers of the state legislature are to be exercised by the Parliament. The **President either suspends or dissolves the state legislative assembly.**

**Revocation:** A proclamation of President's Rule may be revoked by the President at any time by a subsequent proclamation. Such a proclamation does not require parliamentary approval. This happens, in case, the leader of a party produces letters of support from a majority of members of the Assembly, and stakes his claim to form a government.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & JUDGEMENTS ON PRESIDENT'S RULE

The **Administrative Reforms Commission (1968)** recommended that the report of the governor regarding the President's rule has to be objective and also the governor should exercise his own judgment in this regard. The **Rajamannar Committee (1971)** recommended the deletion of **Articles 356 and 357** from the Constitution of India. The necessary provisions for safeguards against arbitrary action of the ruling party at the Centre under Article 356 should be incorporated in the Constitution. The **Sarkaria Commission (1988)** recommended that Article 356 should be used in very rare cases when it becomes unavoidable to restore the breakdown of constitutional machinery in the State. The Supreme Court enlisted the situations where the **exercise of power under Article 356 could be proper**. One such situation is that of 'Hung Assembly', i.e. where after general elections to the assembly, no party secures a majority.



**Justice V.Chelliah Commission (2002)** recommended that **Article 356** must be used sparingly and only as a remedy of the last resort after exhausting all actions **under Articles 256, 257 and 355**. The **Punchhi commission (2007)** recommended that these **Articles 355 & 356 be amended**. It sought to protect the interests of the States by trying to curb their misuse by the Centre.





# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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## AUNG SAN SUU KYI DETAINED AS ARMY GRABS POWER

❖ In Myanmar, a **military coup** was put in place on 1st February 2021, after the **country's military detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi** along with President Win Myint and other members of the ruling party.



❖ **Myanmar military (also known as the Tatmadaw)**, took this step because they declared the **November 2020 Myanmar general election results** fraudulent, in which **Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory** in Parliamentary election 2020 to form next Government.

❖ The military has handed over the power to **military chief Min Aung Hlaing** and declared a state of emergency for one year.

## ROHINGYAS MUSLIMS IN BHASHAN CHAR ISLAND

❖ The **Bangladesh Authorities** recently moved about **1,750 Rohingya Muslims** to a **disputed island in the Bay of Bengal called "Bhashan Char Island"**. This move-in Bangladesh was opposed by refugees already living on the island.



❖ The island is also called **Char Piya**. It is in Hatiya Upazila, Bangladesh. The island is located in the **Bay of Bengal**, about 6 kilometres from Sandwip Island and 60 kilometres from the mainland. Its area is 40 square kilometres.

❖ **Bhashan Char island** was formed in 2006 by Himalayan silt. **Cox's Bazar** is a city, **fishing port, tourist centre** and regional headquarters in southern Bangladesh. The city is famous for its long natural sandy beaches. It is also called Panowa.

## UK SPECIAL VISA SCHEME FOR HONG KONG RESIDENTS

- ❖ The **UK is opening a special visa scheme** that will allow **lakhs of Hong Kong residents** the opportunity to immigrate and eventually apply for British citizenship.



- ❖ Visas will be issued to Hong Kong citizens and their immediate family members holding **British National (Overseas) passports**, and provide fast-track access to **UK citizenship**.
- ❖ Applicants who have obtained a visa can live and work in the **UK for 5 years**, after which they can apply for settlement. After **twelve months, they can apply for citizenship**. This move is considered the UK's most generous welcoming of foreign workers **since the entry of new EU citizens in 2004**.

## MARIO DRAGHI SWORN IN AS NEW PM OF ITALY

- ❖ The **former European Central Bank Chief Mario Draghi** has been sworn in as the new **Prime Minister of Italy** on 12 February 2021. The 73-year-old had served as President of the European Central Bank from 2011 until 2019.



- ❖ He **replaces Giuseppe Conte**, who resigned recently after losing majority support from his coalition government over his handling of the coronavirus pandemic. Here **Italy goes again, with its 67th government since World War II**.
- ❖ The **politics of Italy** are conducted through a parliamentary republic with a **multi-party system**. Italy has been a democratic republic since 2 June 1946, when the **monarchy was abolished by popular referendum** and a constituent assembly was elected to draft a constitution, which was promulgated on 1 January 1948.

## BABUR CRUISE MISSILE LAUNCHED BY PAKISTAN ARMY

- ❖ The Pakistan Army conducted a successful test-firing of a short-range **surface-to-surface ballistic missile ‘Babar’** on February 11, 2021. This test was the third missile test carried out over the past three weeks.



- ❖ The Babur cruise missile IA was launched from **Multi Tube Missile Launch Vehicle**. This missile is capable of hitting land and sea targets with “high precision” up to 450 kilometres away.
- ❖ Earlier, Pakistan army conducted a successful test of the **surface-to-surface ballistic missile Shaheen-III** in January 2021, followed by the ‘training launch’ of nuclear-capable ballistic mis-sile **Ghaznavi in February 2021**.

## NEW START TREATY EXTENDED B/W RUSSIA & US

- ❖ The **United States has extended the “New START” nuclear disarmament treaty with Russia** for a period of five years.
- ❖ The **New START**, which stands for Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the **United States and the Russian Federation**.



- ❖ The new strategic arms reduction treaty was formally signed on April 8, 2010, and after ratification, entered into force on 5 February 2011. The **New START treaty** was set to expire on February 5, 2021, but both the parties have further extended it for five more years, till February 2026.

## TURKEY'S TEN-YEAR SPACE PROGRAM

- ❖ **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan** announced an ambitious **ten-year space program** that includes a mission to the moon, sending Turkish astronauts into space and developing **international viable satellite system**.



- ❖ Turkey plans to establish a "**first contact with the moon**" on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the nation in 2023.
- ❖ Turkey established the **Turkish Space Agency (TUA)** in 2018, aiming to include a few other countries in the space program. The **first phase of the lunar mission** will be completed under international cooperation. The second phase of the mission will use Turkish rockets.

## CHINA BECOMES LARGEST TRADING PARTNER OF EU

- ❖ The **People's Republic of China** has overtaken the **United States (US)** as the **biggest trading partner of the European Union (EU)** in 2020, according to the data by the European Union statistics agency, **Eurostat**.



- ❖ Britain, which left **the European Union in 2020**, was the **third-largest trading partner for the bloc**, behind China and the United States.
- ❖ **The trade volume of the EU with China** reached 586 billion euros (**\$711 billion**) in 2020, compared to 555 billion euros (**\$673 billion**) for the US. Bilateral trade with the UK reached 444.7 billion euros.
- ❖ The **EU exports to China rose by 2.2 per cent** to 202.5 billion euros while imports from China increased by 5.6 per cent to 383.5 billion euros.

## US OFFICIALLY REJOINS PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

- ❖ The **United States** has officially rejoined the **Paris Agreement**, under the Presidency of **US President Joe Biden**.
- ❖ Earlier, in November 2020, the US had officially exited the agreement on the **order of then-President Donald Trump**.



- ❖ The **landmark Paris climate agreement** was signed in **2015**, as per which countries are expected to enhance their commitments to curb **greenhouse gas emissions every five years**.

## ISRAEL LAUNCHED CORONAVIRUS GREEN PASS SYSTEM

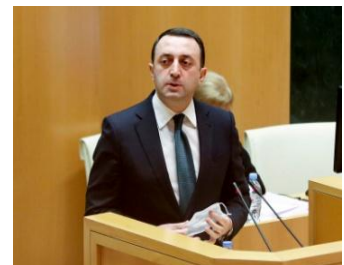
- ❖ Israel has launched a coronavirus “green pass” system, which allows people who have been vaccinated to access public facilities that would otherwise be off-limits.
- ❖ As of **Sunday COVID-19 inoculation** is a sort of status symbol in Israel. Israelis who have gotten both **Pfizer vaccine shots** and those who have recovered from the virus get a “**Green Pass**” certificate in the form of a **QR code** or printout for people without smart phones.



- ❖ The pass allows entry to **gyms, swimming pools, hotels, entertainment venues and sporting events**. Green Pass privileges and restrictions are raising legal and moral questions.

## IRAKLI GARIBASHVILI SWORN AS NEW PM OF GEORGIA

- ❖ The **Parliament of Georgia** confirmed **Irakli Garibashvili** as **Prime Minister** along with a vote of confidence in the cabinet Garibashvili put forward.



- ❖ Garibashvili pledged to create a **long-term development strategy for Georgia** in his first one hundred days in office.
- ❖ First, on the agenda, **Garibashvili will continue the essential work of the government** to ably manage the pandemic and accelerate the focus on rebuilding the economy while continuing to strengthen **Georgia's security and democratic institutions.**

## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

### MILITARY COUP IN MYANMAR

Recently, the Myanmar military has grabbed power in a coup - the third time in the nation's history since its independence from British rule in 1948. A one-year state of emergency has been imposed and **democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been detained.** 'Coup' is generally described as a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government.



### GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION & POLITY OF MYANMAR

**Myanmar, also known as Burma, is in South East Asia** and neighbours Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, China and India. It has a population of about 54 million, most of whom are Burmese speakers, although other languages are also spoken. The **biggest city is Yangon (Rangoon) but the capital is Nay Pyi Taw.** The main religion is Buddhism. There are many ethnic groups in the country, including **Rohingya Muslims.** The country gained independence from Britain in 1948. It was ruled by the armed forces from 1962 until 2011, when a **new government began ushering in a return to civilian rule.** In the 2010s, the military regime decided to transition the country towards democracy. Although the armed forces remained powerful, political opponents were freed and elections were allowed to be held. **The NLD won the 2015 election, the**

country's first free and fair election participated by multiple parties, and formed the government, raising hopes that the country is on its way to full transition to democracy.

## ABOUT THE RECENT MILITARY COUP

In the November 2020 **parliamentary election**, Suu Kyi's party **National League for Democracy (NLD)** secured the majority of the seats. In the Myanmar's Parliament, the military holds 25% of the total seats according to the 2008 military-drafted constitution and several key ministerial positions are also reserved for military appointees. When the newly elected **Myanmar lawmakers were to hold the first session of Parliament in 2021**, the military imposed a state of emergency for one year citing massive voting fraud in the parliamentary elections.

## GLOBAL REACTION OF THE SITUATION

- **China:** 'All parties in Myanmar will properly handle their differences under the constitution and legal framework to **maintain political and social stability**'.
- **USA:** The **USA President threatened to reimpose sanctions on Myanmar** following a coup by the country's military leaders and called for a concerted international response to press them to relinquish power.
- **ASEAN Countries:** ASEAN's current chair, Brunei, called for 'dialogue among parties, reconciliation and the return to normalcy'. **Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia expressed concern**, while Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines noted that **this was Myanmar's 'internal affair'**.
- **India's Reaction:** India supports the process of democratic transition in Myanmar. Though **India has expressed deep concern** over recent developments in Myanmar,





cutting off from the Myanmar military is not a viable option as India has significant economic and strategic interests in Myanmar and its neighbourhood.

## INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MYANMAR MILITARY

**India's military-diplomatic outreach** to Myanmar became a cornerstone of its **Act East policy**. On the eve of the recent visit of the Foreign Secretary **Chief of the Army Staff to Myanmar** in 2020, Myanmar handed over 22 Indian insurgents from across the border and it was decided to ramp up the sale of military hardware to Myanmar, including 105 mm light artillery guns, naval gunboats and more recently, lightweight torpedoes. **Recent example of cooperation is that Myanmar** has begun to vaccinate itself with the 1.5 million doses of Covid vaccine sent by India, while putting **China's 3,00,000 doses on hold**.

## INDIA'S INTEREST IN MYANMAR

**Infrastructure and Connectivity:** India has cultivated several infrastructure and development projects with Myanmar, which it sees as the “**gateway to the East**” and **ASEAN countries**.

**Operationalisation of the crucial Sittwe port** in Myanmar's Rakhine state by 2021 is committed. India assists infrastructure projects such as

the **India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway** and the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project**. The Kaladan project will link Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar and then from Myanmar's Kaladan river to India's north-east. The two countries signed the Land Border Crossing Agreement in 2018, which allowed bona fide travellers with valid documents to cross the border at two international points of **entry/exit- Moreh-Tamu and Zokhawthar-Rih**.



**Security:** India has been concerned over some militant groups like the **United National Liberation Front (UNLF)** and **National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)** from the North-East region taking shelter in Myanmar. Indian needs perpetual support and coordination from Myanmar for the maintenance of security and stability along its **North East border areas**.

**Health and Pandemic:** As a part of **India's Medical or Drug Diplomacy** a package of 3,000 vials of the **antiviral Remdesivir** given to assist Myanmar in its fight against the pandemic. India has shown willingness to prioritise Myanmar in sharing **Covid -19 vaccines, when available.**

**Rohingya Issues:** India is committed to ensuring safe, sustainable and speedy return of Rohingya refugees from refugee camps of India and Bangladesh. Building on the progress made under the **Rakhine State Development Programme (RSDP)**, India has recently proposed to finalise projects under phase-III of the programme, including setting up of a **skills training centre and upgrading of agricultural mechanisation.**

**Investment:** With Indian investments of over USD 1.2 billion, Myanmar holds considerable importance **than any other country in South Asia.** The two countries are also expanding partnership in the area of energy cooperation. Recently, India approved an investment of over **USD 120 million** in the **Shwe Oil and Gas project.**

## CONCLUSION

**India and Myanmar have shared cultural roots and historical relations,** apart from the strategic, economic, social and political ties. Myanmar is a member of both **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, which is an organization of East Asian nations as well as the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** which bridges South and South-East Asia. Connectivity projects through Myanmar help India overcome its **Chicken-neck dilemma (Siliguri Corridor).** Myanmar is also necessary for the development of **North-Eastern India.** Myanmar stands at the confluence of India's Neighbourhood First and Act East Policy and India-Myanmar partnership is at the heart of **India's vision to create a connected and cooperative neighbourhood.** Recently, India and Myanmar had signed 10 agreements with a focus on socio-economic development of Myanmar, during **Myanmar President U Win Myint's visit to India.**

**Myanmar's growing closeness** with China and the recent proposal of **China Myanmar Economic Corridor** is a cause of concern for India amidst **growing India-China tension** India should continue to engage with the present regime in Myanmar working towards mutual development of people of both the countries while it should support sharing experiences in constitutionalism and federalism **to assist Myanmar in resolving the prevailing stalemate.**

## CEASEFIRE B/W INDIA & PAKISTAN ALONG LOC

**India and Pakistan** have agreed to observe the 2003 ceasefire agreements **along the Line of Control (LoC)** and all other sectors. The agreement comes in the wake of over 5000 instances of **Cross Fire Violations (CFVs) along the Line of Control (LoC)** and other areas in Jammu and Kashmir, resulting in 46 fatal casualties in 2020.



The decision was taken after discussion between the **two Director Generals of Military Operations (DGsMO).**

## 2003 CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

The original ceasefire agreement was reached in November 2003, **four years after the Kargil War (1999).** The 2003 ceasefire agreement remains a milestone as it brought peace along the LoC until 2006. **Between 2003 and 2006,** not a single bullet was fired by the jawans of India and Pakistan. But since 2006, **ceasefire violations have become the norm with increasing frequency.**



**Backchannel Diplomacy:** Several signs indicate that back channel diplomacy led up to the talks and helped produce a joint statement between the two sides, **beginning with Pakistan Army chief General's call for resolving the Kashmir issue “peacefully”** earlier in the month of February 2021. Pakistan supported **India’s five proposals for collaboration at the South Asian level on containing Covid-19.** India allowed the aircraft carrying Pakistan Prime Minister a clear passage to Sri Lanka, where the Pakistani leader declared a USD 50 million defence line

of credit for Colombo. However, during these apparent signs of back channel negotiations, both sides have maintained their respective positions on the Kashmir issue. After the Pakistan government moved to provide **provisional provincial status for Gilgit Baltistan in November 2020**, India hit out saying **Gilgit Baltistan was an “integral part of India”**.

**Significance of the Latest Re-commitment to the 2003 Agreement:** The agreement may contribute to an improvement of the **security situation on the ground in Kashmir**. India has often alleged that many of the ceasefire violations were aimed at providing cover to infiltrating militants. Infiltration attempts may now drop, and go some way in meeting a key Indian demand on cross-border terrorism.

## INDIA-PAKISTAN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The **two sides last connected at the highest level during the Christmas day of 2015**, when Indian Prime Minister landed in Lahore for an unannounced visit to meet **Pakistani Prime Minister**. Dialogue broke down soon thereafter because of the Pathankot airbase attack of 2nd January, 2016, which was followed by the **attack at the garrison in Uri and the Indian response with a surgical strike along the border**. Bilateral ties continued to nosedive because of the Pulwama terror attack of 14th February, 2019, and the Balakot operation by India.

## DIFFERENCE B/W LOC & LAC

**Line of Control:** LOC or Line of Control is a live line with a lot of **activities like firing and face to face interaction**. It is clearly demarcated by the militaries. It denotes a kind of boundary separating parts of Indian UT i.e. **Jammu & Kashmir**; controlled by India and illegally occupied by Pakistan. **The length of LOC is around 776-**



**kilometers**. Indian part (southern and eastern parts of the region) of LOC is known as Jammu and Kashmir which constitutes about 45 percent of Kashmir. **The Line of Control (LoC)** emerged from the **1948 ceasefire line negotiated by the United Nations (UN)** after the Kashmir War. It was designated as the LoC in 1972, following the Shimla Agreement between the two

countries. LoC is **demarcated upto the Siachen Glacier (Point NJ9842)**- the world's highest battlefield. LoC is delineated on a map signed by the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) of both armies and has the international sanctity of a legal agreement.

**Line of Actual Control:** LAC stands for Line of Actual Control. It is a **boundary between China and India**. The concept of “**Line of Actual Control**” (LAC) came in a bilateral agreement in 1993, although there was no concrete settlement on ground positions between these two countries. The LAC separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. **It is a big empty region and nearly 50 to 100 kms distance is maintained by the armies of India and China**. The Chinese government considers LAC to be around **2,000 km** while India considers the **LAC to be 3,488 km long**. LAC is divided into three regions: the western sector in Ladakh, the middle sector in **Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh**, and the eastern sector which spans **Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim**.

## BACK CHANNEL DIPLOMACY

The **back channel diplomacy** is one of the diplomatic **tactics practiced by states to achieve the objectives of foreign policy** in solving international disputes outside official bureaucratic structures and formats. It takes place away from the eyes and lenses of the media in order to **ensure the confidentiality of information** and keep them away from official and media trading until they reach the target.

## CONCLUSION

**Confidence-building measures (CBM)** should be pursued to alleviate the “trust deficit” but should not be used as a substitute for the resolution of disputes. **Economic co-operation and trade should be facilitated to develop mutuality of interest**. The problems of terrorism and **Non-State Actors** need to be addressed jointly through institutionalised mechanisms. If the new resolve on the ceasefire holds, several low hanging fruits are available to further improve the atmosphere between the two countries, including the restoration of full strength **diplomatic missions on both sides**.





# ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

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## RBI PROJECTED INDIA'S GDP GROWTH

❖ In the last bi-monthly monetary policy meet for the current, the Reserve Bank of India projected India's **GDP growth rate at 10.5 per cent for the fiscal year 2021-22.**



❖ The growth outlook has improved significantly, and the vaccination drive will further boost the economic rebound.

❖ The apex bank expects the Indian economy to grow in the range of **8.3 per cent to 26.2 per cent in the first half of FY22, followed by a 6 per cent growth in Q3FY22.** The central bank's projection is lower than that of the Economic Survey that projected India to grow at a rate of **11 per cent in the coming fiscal.**

## WORLD'S FIRST 'CARBON NEUTRAL OIL' FROM US

❖ Billionaire **Mukesh Ambani-owned Reliance Industries Ltd** has received the world's first consignment of '**carbon-neutral oil**' from **Oxy Low Carbon Ventures (OLCV)**, a division of United State oil major **Occidental**.



❖ This feat will further help the oil major to accomplish its target of becoming a **net zero-carbon company by 2035.**

❖ This transaction is the **first major petroleum shipment of Reliance**, for which **greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** from the entire crude lifecycle, including oil extraction, transport, storage, shipping, refining, subsequent use, and combustion, have been offset.

## RBI COMMITTEE FOR URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANKS



- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will set up an **expert committee on Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**.



- ❖ The committee, involving all stakeholders, will provide a medium-term road map for strengthening the sector, enable faster resolution/rehabilitation of UCBs.
- ❖ Along with enabling faster resolution of UCBs, the committee will also examine **critical aspects related to the urban co-op banks. The provisions of the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020** have become applicable to Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs) from June 26, 2020.

## PAYPAL TO SHUT ITS PAYMENT SERVICES IN INDIA

- ❖ The **California-based global digital payment platform PayPal** has announced that the company has decided to wind down its domestic payment services in India with effect from April 01, 2021.



- ❖ The decision has been taken because the company wants to shift its focus on **cross-border payments business**.
- ❖ However, the global customer will be able to pay Indian merchants using Paypal. PayPal was a payments options on many Indian online apps such as travel and ticketing service **MakeMyTrip**, **online film booking app BookMyShow**, and **food delivery app Swiggy**.

## RBI LAUNCHES FINANCIAL LITERACY WEEK (FLW)

- ❖ The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has launched the **Financial Literacy Week (FLW)** from February 8-12, 2021, to propagate financial education.
- ❖ **RBI conducts Financial Literacy Week (FLW)** every year since 2016 to propagate financial education messages on a particular theme every year across the country, through a focused campaign.
- ❖ The theme for 2021 FLW is” **Credit Discipline and Credit from Formal Institutions**”. Banks have been advised to disseminate the information and **create awareness among its customers and the general public.**



## RBI'S ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN SCHEME

- ❖ **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has released the **Annual Report of the Ombudsman Schemes** for the year 2019-20. There was an increase of around **65 per cent** in the receipt of complaints out of which almost 92 per cent have been disposed of.
- ❖ RBI has three Ombudsman- **Banking, Non-Banking Finance Company (i.e. NBFC) and digital transactions.** A common man can approach this Ombudsman for their grievances. As per the RBI's report, all three received in total 3,30,543 complaints in 19-20 as compared to 2,00,362 in 18-19.
- ❖ Banking Ombudsman received major complaints **regarding ATM & Debit Cards, Mobile & Electronic Banking while NBFC's Ombudsmen** received most complaints about non-observance of regulatory guidelines, lack of transparency in contract/ loan agreement and levy of charges without notice.



## SBI JOINS JP MORGAN'S BLOCKCHAIN NETWORK

- ❖ **State Bank of India** has tied up with **JPMorgan** to use the **US bank's blockchain technology** to speed up overseas transactions. The tie-up is expected to reduce SBI customers' transaction costs and time taken for payments.



- ❖ **SBI has joined Liink**, a new blockchain-based interbank data network **developed by JPMorgan**. By integrating the technology, the bank expects to reduce transaction costs and improve cross-border payments for its customers.
- ❖ Liink is a peer-to-peer network and ecosystem operating under the umbrella of JPMorgan's blockchain- and digital-currency-focused business, dubbed Onyx.
- ❖ Piloted in 2017, the product was originally referred to as **Interbank Information Network** and rebranded as **Liink** in October 2020.

## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

### FINANCE MINISTER PRESENTED BUDGET 2020-21 (PART-1)

**Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** presented the **Union Budget 2021** on February 1, 2021. This was the first paperless budget. The Finance Minister read out the document from a Made-in-India tablet. This was the third Budget presentation for **FM Nirmala Sitharaman** since she took over the mantle of **Finance Ministry and the first one to be presented after the COVID-19 pandemic**. The Union Budget 2020-21 was focused on the **centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat vision**. It did not propose any changes in personal income tax slabs. The Union Cabinet approved the Union Budget 2021-22 prior to its presentation in the Parliament. The Budget 2021 has proposed several new schemes and announcements including the launch of PM **Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, Mission Poshan 2.0, Urban Jal Jeevan Mission, Urban Swacch**

**Bharat Mission**, Voluntary Vehicle Scrapping Policy, National Railway Plan, National Hydrogen Mission, First Digital Census, Investor Charter and first central university in Leh.



**The Budget 2021-12 PART-A** mainly rests on six pillars: Health & Well-Being, Physical & Financial Capital & Infrastructure, Inclusive development for aspirational India, Reinvigorating human capital, Innovation & R&D and Minimum Govt & Maximum Governance and **Part-B was on Taxation.**

**Part A- Vision for Atmanirbhar Bharat - Six Pillars.** The Budget 2021-22 rests on six pillars:

- Health & Well-Being
- Physical & Financial Capital & Infrastructure
- Inclusive development for aspirational India
- Reinvigorating human capital
- Innovation & R&D
- Minimum Govt & Maximum Governance.

## HEALTH AND WELL BEING

**PM Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana:** PM Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana to be launched to develop primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare systems, strengthen existing health systems and support future health interventions with an outlay of about 64,180 crores over 6 years. This will be in addition to the National Health mission and will support 17,000 rural and 11,000 urban health care centres. Mission Poshan 2.0 to be launched to improve nutritional outcomes across 112 aspirational districts.



**Jal Jivan Urban Mission:** Urban Jal Jeevan Mission to be launched and implemented over five years with an outlay of Rs 2.87 lakh crore.

*Urban Swacch Bharat Mission* to implemented over five years with an outlay of Rs 2.87 lakh crore. **Clean Air Programme:** Proposal to allocate Rs. 2,217 crore for 32 urban centres to tackle the burgeoning air pollution problem.

## PHYSICAL & FINANCIAL CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- **The Finance Minister** stated that to realise five trillion dollar economy, India's manufacturing sector has to grow in double digits for a sustained period. A **PLI scheme has been announced for 13 sectors to** achieve the same with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore over the next 5 years. Mega Investment **Textile Parks- 7 textile parks** will be added in the next three years.
- **National Infrastructure Pipeline:** The **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** was launched with 6835 projects, which has now expanded to 7400 projects. The **NIP will require major funding** from both centre and financial sector.
- **Proposal to set up Development Finance** Institution at a cost of Rs 20,000 crore. A **national monetising pipeline** will be launched and a dashboard will be created to overlook the progress.
- **Propose sharp increase in Capital expenditure:** The Finance Minister has proposed a sharp increase in Capital Expenditure & thus have provided Rs 5.54 lakh crores which is 34.5% more than the BE 2020-21.
- **Roads & Highways:** Over 13,000 km length of roads at a cost of Rs 3.3 lakh cr has already been awarded under Rs 5.35 lakh cr **Bharatmala project of which 3,800 kms** have been constructed. By March 2022 another 8,500 km and an additional 11,000 kms of **National Highway Corridor will be awarded.** 3900 km of national highway work will be undertaken in Tamil Nadu. The construction will start next year. 1100 km of national highway work will be undertaken in Kerala including 600 km stretch of **Mumbai-Kanyakumari corridor.** 600km corridor to be developed in West Bengal at a

cost of Rs 25000 crore. **National highway** work of more than 34000 crore covering upto 1000 km will be taken up in Assam. The Finance Minister also provided an enhanced outlay of Rs 1,18,101 crore for ports and highways. A lot of airports will be monetised for operation and management.

- **Railway Infrastructure - National Railway Plan:** The **Indian Railways** has prepared a National Rail Plan for India 2030. The plan is to create a future-ready railways system by 2030. The government aims to bring down the logistic cost for industry to enable Make in India. **The Finance Minister proposed to provide** a record sum of Rs 1,10,055 crores for Railways of which Rs 1,07,100 crores is for **Capital Expenditure only**. 100% electrification will be completed by 2023.
- **Urban Infrastructure:** New scheme to be launched to support augmentation of public bus service. it will boost automobile sector and create employment opportunities for the youth and enable smooth mobility to citizens. MetroLite and MetroNeo to be introduced in Tier 2 cities and peripheral areas of Tier 1 cities. Additional central funding will be provided to **Kochi Metro Phase II, Chennai Metro Phase 2, Bengaluru Phase 2A and B, Nashik and Nagpur Metros.**

## INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR ASPIRATIONAL INDIA

**Operation Green Scheme** to be enlarged to cover 22 perishable crops. 1000 more mandis to be integrated with **E-NAM market place**. Agricultural Infrastructure funds will be made available to **APMCs for augmenting their infrastructure**. MSP increased to 1.5 times



**Wheat Procurement -** A total of Rs 33,874 crore was paid to farmers in 2013-14 and this was increased to Rs 62,804 crore in 2019 -20 and Rs 75,050 crore in 2020-21.

**Paddy Procurement-** The amount paid for paddy was Rs 53,928 crore in 2013-2014 and in 2019-20, this increased to Rs 1.41 lakh crore and it is further estimated to increase to Rs. 1,72,752 crore in 2020-21.

**Fisheries: Five major fishing harbours** to be developed into fishing hubs for economic activity including **Chennai, Kochi, Paradip, Petuaghat and Visakhapatnam**. Seaweed farming to be promoted. Multipurpose seaweed park to be established in Tamil Nadu

## REINVIGORATING HUMAN CAPITAL

**Setting up of Higher Education Commission.** 1,00 **Sainik Schools** will be set up in partnership with NGOs, private schools, and states. Proposal to set up central university in Leh. 750 Eklavya schools will be set up in tribal areas. Propose to increase cost of **Eklavya schools for schedule caste and schedule tribe students**. More than 15,000 schools A be strengthened under NEP 2020. An **'umbrella' structure will be created** for central higher education institutions in various cities such as Hyderabad.

## INNOVATION R & D

**Gaganyaan Mission:** The first unmanned launch of the **Gaganyaan Mission** is slated for december 2021. Deep ocean mission to be launched for the conservation of deep sea biodiversity.

## MINIMUM GOVT. AND MAXIMUM GOVERNANCE

**First Digital Census** to be launched. The centre has allocated Rs 3,758 crore for the same this year. **Rs.1000 crore proposed for welfare of tea workers**, especially women and children, in Assam and West Bengal. Rs 300 crore to be granted to Goa government **to celebrate 50 years of liberation from the Portuguese**.

**Migrant workers and labourers:** One nation one ration card scheme implemented by 32 states and union territories- covering 86 percent of beneficiaries. The **remaining four states/ UTs to be integrated soon. New proposal for portal for migrant workers.** The portal will maintain information on gig workers and construction workers, which will help provide benefits to migrant workers. It will help formulate health, housing, skill, insurance credit & food schemes for migrant workers.

## FINANCE MINISTER PRESENTED BUDGET 2020-21 (PART-2)

### FIRST EVER PAPERLESS BUDGET 2021

The **Union Budget 2021 will go paperless this year** for the first time since India's Independence. The Budget will be like never before and will be **delivered in a paperless format**. No hard copies of the Budget 2021 will be printed due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**. The Finance Ministry has launched the **'Union Budget app' to enable smooth access to Budget-related documents**. The app can be easily downloaded from the app store in both Android and Apple smart phones. All documents will be available for download after the **Finance Minister's speech at the Parliament**. The Union Budget is printed every year in the finance ministry's in-house press, involving around 100 employees of the ministry who have to stay together for **almost 15 days till the papers are printed, sealed and delivered** on the day of the Budget. The tradition will not be followed this year for the first time, taking into consideration the Covid-19 pandemic and the peak in the number of cases again.



The **government has decided to share soft copies of the Budget instead**. The Budget papers including both the Union Budget and Economic Survey will not be printed and soft copies will be provided. All members of the Parliament will receive the soft copies of the Union Budget. In a significant development, the Finance Ministry launched the **'Union Budget' app during the symbolic 'Halwa Ceremony** to enable users to easily download and access budget documents. This is not the first time that there would be a change in tradition in the budget presentation under **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman**. She had previously done away with the colonial-



era tradition of carrying Budget papers in a briefcase and **introduced the Budget 'Bahi Khata' or a ledger**, enclosed in a red cloth folder and tied with a string.

## INCOME TAX BUDGET 2021

The **Union Budget 2021** has been presented by **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** on February 1, 2021, at 11 am. Amid the high expectations from the **'budget like no other'**, as promised by the **Finance Minister**, the budget doesn't see any change in the income tax structure. After the economic destruction caused by the COVID-19



pandemic in 2020 which greatly impacted almost every sector, the salaried individuals were of the hope that the government might **bring some tax advantages with Budget 2021**. However, the government has bought some relief for the senior citizens above the age of 75 years as well as has decided to introduce National Faceless Income Tax Tribunal. Read below to know more about the announcements made by the Finance Minister regarding the tax structure.

## MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS BY FINANCE MINISTER

**Senior Citizens of 75 age and above:** Exemption from **filing the Income Tax Return**. The citizens above the age of 75 years with a pension income have been exempted from filing the Income Tax Return. There will be **new rules for the removal of double taxation for NRIs**. They will also be allowed to operate One Person Companies in India.

**National Faceless Income Tax Tribunal:** A faceless dispute redressal will be set up for the small taxpayers. Increase in **the tax audit limit from 5 crores to 10 crores**, announced Finance Minister. While announcing the incentives, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced that the affordable housing projects will be able to avail tax holiday till March 31, 2022. For further easing the filing of Income Tax Returns, details of capital gains and interest from banks, post offices, etc. **will be pre-filled**.

**Late deposit of employee's contribution** to the Provident Fund by the employer will not be allowed as the deduction to the employer. The **Finance Minister** has also announced the **advanced tax liability** on the dividend income will arise after the declaration of payment of dividends.

## TAX EXEMPTION EXTENDED ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In order to **boost consumption and growth**, **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** in Budget 2021 announced the extension of tax exemption on **affordable housing** for a year. Highlighting 'affordable housing' and 'Housing for all' as a priority area, the government extended the eligibility of tax deduction till March 31, 2021. In the **Budget of July 2019**, the government had provided an additional income tax deduction of up to Rs. 1.5 lakhs for home loans to purchase affordable housing. In order to **ensure affordable housing for the migrant workers**, the finance minister also announced the tax holiday extension for one more year for affordable rental housing projects. Under serious tax evasion cases, only if there is evidence of concealment of income of **Rs. 50 lakh or more in a year**, the reassessment can be opened for **10 years**. For others, the reopening of the assessment will only be for 3 years.

## CHANGES IN CUSTOM DUTY

The **custom duty on copper** has been reduced to 2.5%. For encouraging domestic value addition of the chemicals, the **customs duty on Naptha has been reduced to 2.5%**. Custom Duty on silver and gold will be rationalized. The custom duties on the imported solar inverters have been increased from **5% to 20% and on solar lanterns**; it has been increased from 5% to 15%. There will be 5% **customs duty on all the nylon products**. There will be a customs duty of 7% on Tunnel Boring Machines. To benefit farmers, the government has decided to raise the customs duty on cotton from 0 to 10%



## PRIVATISATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

The **Union Budget 2021** has announced the **privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company** in the upcoming fiscal 2021-22. The move, coming after 51 years of nationalization of government-owned banks in 1969, will give the private sector a key role in the banking sector. Presently, **India has 22 private banks and 10 small finance banks.**

## BACKGROUND OF THE PRIVATISATION

Then **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi**, who was also Finance Minister, **decided to nationalise the 14 largest private banks** on July 19, 1969. The idea was to align the banking sector with the socialistic approach of the then government. **State Bank of India had been nationalised in 1955 itself**, and the insurance sector in 1956.



Various governments in the last 20 years were for and **against privatisation of PSU banks**. In 2015, the government had suggested privatisation but the then **RBI Governor did not favour the idea**. For over 50 years, successive governments have chosen not to bother beyond a point. **As former RBI Governor Dr Y V Reddy** once said, nationalisation was a political decision, so privatisation too will have to be one. Seen in this context, privatisation of two banks and the indication of carrying it further is a major reform signalling a changing political approach. These moves, along with **setting up an asset reconstruction company** entirely owned by banks, underline an approach of finding market-led solutions to challenges in the financial sector. The current steps of privatisation, along with setting up an **Asset Reconstruction Company (Bad Bank)** entirely owned by banks, underline an approach of finding market-led solutions to challenges in the financial sector.

## REASON FOR PRIVATISATION

**Degrading Financial Position of Public Sector Banks:** Years of capital injections and governance reforms have not been able to improve the **financial position of public sector banks significantly**. Many of them have higher levels of stressed assets than private banks, and also lag the latter on profitability, **market capitalisation and dividend payment record.**

***Part of a Long-Term Project:*** Privatisation of **two public sector banks** will set the ball rolling for a long-term project that envisages only a handful of state-owned banks, with the rest either consolidated with **strong banks or privatised**. The initial plan of the government was to privatise four. **Depending on the success with the first two**, the government is likely to go for divestment in other two or three banks in the next financial year. This will free up the government, the majority owner, from continuing to provide equity support to the banks year after year. Through a series of moves over the last few years, the government is now left with **12 state-owned banks, from 28 earlier**.

***Strengthening Banks:*** The government is trying to strengthen the strong banks and also minimise their numbers through **privatisation to reduce its burden of support**.

***Recommendations of Different Committees:*** Many committees had proposed bringing down the government stake in public banks below 51%:

The **Narasimham Committee proposed 33%**. The **P J Nayak Committee suggested below 50%**. An RBI Working Group recently suggested the entry of business houses into the banking sector.

***Selection of Banks:*** The two banks that will be privatised will be selected through a process in which **NITI Aayog will make recommendations**, which will be considered by a core group of secretaries on disinvestment and then the **Alternative Mechanism (or Group of Ministers)**.

## ISSUES WITH PSU BANKS

**High Non-Performing Assets (NPAs):** After a series of mergers and equity injections by the government, the performance of public sector banks has shown improvement over the last couple of years. However, compared with private banks, they continue to have **high NPAs and stressed assets** although this has started declining.

**Impact of Covid:** After the Covid-related regulatory relaxations are lifted, banks are expected to report higher NPAs and loan losses. As per the **RBI's recent Financial Stability Report**, gross

**NPA ratio of all commercial banks** may increase from 7.5% in September 2020 to 13.5% by September 2021. This would mean the government would again need to inject equity into weak public sector banks.

**Rising Market Share:** Private banks' market share in loans has risen to 36% in 2020 from 21.26% in 2015, while **public sector banks' share has fallen to 59.8% from 74.28%.**

**Better Products and Services:** Competition heated up after the RBI allowed more private banks since the 1990s. They have expanded the market share through new products, technology, and better services, and also attracted better valuations in stock markets. **HDFC Bank (set up in 1994) has a market capitalisation of Rs. 8.80 lakh crore** while SBI commands just Rs. 3.50 lakh crore.

## ISSUES WITH PRIVATE BANKS

**Governance Issues:** **Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) Bank MD and CEO** was sacked for allegedly extending dubious loans. **Yes Bank CEO was not given extension by the RBI** and now faces investigations by various agencies. **Lakshmi Vilas Bank** faced operational issues and was recently merged with DBS Bank of Singapore.



**Under-reported NPAs:** When the RBI ordered an asset quality review of banks in 2015, many private sector banks, including **Yes Bank, were found under-reporting NPAs.**

In order to improve the governance and management of PSBs, there is a need to implement the **recommendations of the PJ Nayak committee.** Rather than blind privatisation, PSBs can be made into a corporation like **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).** While maintaining government ownership, this will **give more autonomy to PSBs.**



# APPOINTMENTS

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## RS SHARMA AS NEW CEO OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT

- ❖ The **National Health Authority (NHA)** has appointed **RS Sharma** as the new **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of country's flagship public health insurance scheme **Ayushman Bharat**, also called **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana**.



- ❖ He would replace **Indu Bhushan**, who is serving as the Chief Executive of the Ayushman scheme since its inception in 2018.
- ❖ **RS Sharma**, a former chairman of the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)**, who would take charge of the NHA from February 1. **Ayushman Bharat**, a flagship scheme of Government of India, was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**.

## JAY SHAH APPOINTED AS PRESIDENT OF ACC

- ❖ **Jay Shah**, the incumbent **Secretary of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** has been appointed as the new President of the **Asian Cricket Council (ACC)**.



- ❖ He is the youngest person ever to be appointed to the office. He replaces **Nazmul Hussain**, **Chief of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)** who was the previous chief of the ACC.
- ❖ The **ACC is Asia's regional administrative body** and it currently consists of 24 member associations. ACC is responsible for organizing the Asia Cup tournaments.

## PRAVEEN SINHA AS THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CBI

❖ **Department of Personnel and Training**, under Personnel Ministry, has appointed Praveen Sinha, as the interim director of the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)**, with immediate effect on 03 February 2021.



❖ He has been appointed in place of the **incumbent chief RK Shukla**, whose tenure came to an end on February 03, 2021.

❖ Sinha, a 1988-batch **Gujarat cadre Indian Police Service (IPS) officer**, is currently an additional director at CBI, the premier investigating agency of India.

- Central Bureau of Investigation Headquarters: **New Delhi**.
- Central Bureau of Investigation Founded: **1 April 1963**.

## AYESHA AZIZ: INDIA'S YOUNGEST FEMALE PILOT

❖ A 25-year-old **Kashmiri woman, Ayesha Aziz**, has become the **youngest female pilot** in the country. She became the youngest student pilot to get a license at the **age of 15 in 2011**.



❖ The 25 -year-old from Kashmir who is the youngest female pilot in the country acts as a source of inspiration and a beacon of empowerment for numerous Kashmiri women.

❖ In the year 2011, Aziz became the youngest student pilot to get a license at the age of 15 and underwent training to fly a **MIG-29 jet at Russia's Sokol airbase the following year**. She later graduated in aviation from the **Bombay Flying Club (BFC)** and obtained a commercial license in 2017.



## MICHAEL BLOOMBERG AS UN CLIMATE ENVOY

- ❖ The **United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres** re-appointed **Michael Bloomberg** as his **Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions**.



- ❖ **Bloomberg is the founder and owner of Bloomberg LP**, the parent company of Bloomberg News. He was previously appointed as the U.N. special envoy for climate action between March 2018 and November 2019.
- ❖ **Bloomberg will work to strengthen** the group of governments, companies, cities and financial institutions that are working to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, **in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement**.

## AJAY MATHUR AS NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ISA

- ❖ The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** has announced **Dr Ajay Mathur** as its new **Director-General** following his election at the first special assembly of **ISA members**.



- ❖ **Dr Mathur replaces Mr Upendra Tripathy**, who has served as Director-General since the ISA was founded in 2015. **ISA accelerates the demand** for and use of safe, **sustainable, and affordable solar energy for all**.
- ❖ It **aims to mobilize over \$1 trillion USD** of investment into solar projects by 2030 through focused advocacy, policy and regulatory support, capacity building, and overcoming perceived investment barriers.

## PREETI SINHA IN UN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

- ❖ The **UN Capital Development Fund** has appointed Indian-origin investment and development banker **Preeti Sinha as its Executive Secretary**, the highest leadership rank in the institution.



- ❖ She succeeds **Judith Karl**. He will work with a focus on providing micro-finance assistance to women, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises in under-served communities.
- ❖ The **New York-based United Nations Capital Development Fund** is an autonomous UN organization **affiliated with UNDP**. It was established in 1966.
- ❖ The **original mandate of UNCDF**: to assist developing countries in the development of their economies by supplementing existing sources of capital assistance by means of grants and loans.

## DUSHYANT CHAUTALA AS PRESIDENT OF TTFI

- ❖ **Dushyant Chautala has been re-elected** as the President of **Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI)** for a period of four years.
- ❖ He was elected unanimously during the **84th annual meeting of the TTFI**, on February 24, 2021. He is also the current Deputy Chief Minister of Haryana.
- ❖ The 32-year-old was **first elected as President of the TTFI in January 2017**, becoming the youngest President in the history of TTFI.



## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

## FIRST-EVER AFRICAN & WOMAN CHIEF OF WTO

Nigeria's **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** was appointed as Director-General of the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**, the leading international trade body. **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the first African official and the first woman** to hold the position.



## ORIGIN OF WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

The **WTO is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, which was created in 1947. The **Uruguay Round (1986-94)** of the GATT led to the WTO's creation. WTO began operations on 1st January, 1995. The Agreement Establishing the WTO, commonly known as the “**Marrakesh Agreement**”, was signed in **Marrakesh, Morocco in 1994**. WTO is an international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. Main difference between **GATT and WTO** was that GATT mostly dealt with trade in goods, the WTO and its agreements could not only cover goods but also trade in services and other intellectual properties like trade creations, designs, and inventions. **It has its Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.**

Members: The **WTO has 164 members (including European Union)** and 23 observer governments (like **Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc**). India is a founder member of the **1947 GATT and its successor, the WTO.**

## GOVERNING STRUCTURE OF WTO

**Ministerial Conference:** of the **WTO is dominated by its highest authority**, the Ministerial Conference, composed of representatives of all WTO members, which is required to meet at least every two years and which can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements.

**General Council:** It is **composed of all WTO members** and is required to report to the Ministerial Conference. General Council convenes in two particular forms: **Dispute Settlement Body:** To oversee the dispute settlement procedures. **Trade Policy Review Body:** To conduct regular reviews of the trade policies of individual WTO members.

## OBJECTIVES/AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF WTO

- To **set and enforce rules for international trade.** To provide a forum for negotiating and monitoring further trade liberalization. To resolve trade disputes. To increase the **transparency of decision-making processes.** To cooperate with other major international economic institutions involved in global economic management. To help developing countries benefit fully from the global trading system.
- **Global Facilitation of Trade:** By building binding rules for global trade in goods and services, WTO has facilitated dramatic growth in cross-border business activity. The **WTO has not only enhanced the value and quantity of trade** but has also helped in eradicating trade and non-trade barriers.
- **Improved Economic Growth:** Since 1995, the value of world trade has nearly quadrupled, while the real volume of world trade has expanded by 2.7 times. **Domestic reforms and market-opening** commitments have resulted in the lasting boost to national income of nations.
- **Increased Global Value Chains:** The predictable market conditions fostered by the WTO, have combined with improved communications to **enable the rise of global value chains,** trade within these value chains today accounts for almost **70% of total merchandise trade.**



- **Upliftment of Poor Countries:** The least-developed countries receive extra attention in the WTO. All the **WTO agreements recognize** that they must benefit from the greatest possible flexibility, and better-off members must make extra efforts to lower import barriers on least-developed countries' exports.

## RECENT CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH WTO

- **China's State Capitalism:** China's state-owned enterprises present a major challenge to the free-market global trading system and the rulebook of the WTO is inadequate for addressing these challenges. It is due to this that **USA-China are also engaged in Trade war.**




- **Institutional Issues:** The **Appellate Body's operations** have effectively been suspended since December 2019, as the USA's blocking of appointments has left the body without a quorum of adjudicators needed to hear appeals. The crisis with the dispute settlement function of the **WTO is closely linked to the breakdown in its negotiation function.**
- **Lack of Transparency:** There is a problem in WTO negotiations as there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a developed or developing country at the WTO. Members can currently self-designate as developing countries to receive '**special and differential treatment**' – a practice that is the subject of much contention.
- **E-commerce & Digital Trade:** While the global trade landscape has changed significantly over the past 25 years, WTO rules have not kept pace. In 1998, realizing that e-commerce would play a growing role in the global economy, WTO members established a **WTO e-commerce moratorium** to examine all trade-related issues relating to global electronic commerce. Recently, however, the moratorium has been called into question by developing countries because of its implications for collecting revenue.

- **Agriculture and Development:** Agreement on agriculture is facing issues due to **food security and development requirements for** developing countries like India.

## CONCLUSION

**Modernizing the WTO** will necessitate the development of a new set of rules for dealing with digital trade and e-commerce. **WTO members will also have to deal more effectively** with China's trade policies and practices, including how to better handle **state-owned enterprises** and industrial subsidies. Given the pressing issues around climate change, increased efforts to align trade and environmental sustainability could help to both **tackle climate change and reinvigorate the WTO.**



AWARDS  
&  
HONOR

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## AR RAHMAN PRESENTED ALERT BEING AWARDS 2020

❖ **Music composer AR Rahman** and social activist from **Saidapet Hari Krishnan** were among the 14 people who were presented the fourth edition of the **Alert Being Awards 2020** by the NGO ALERT, for their Good Samaritan work.



❖ In his video message, Mr Rahman said ALERT had been doing a brilliant job in **empowering a common man to save lives.**

❖ **Hari Krishnan** had been appointed by the **Greater Chennai Corporation** as a district volunteer head for Covid-19 relief work. The **Alert Being Icon Award** for an organisation was presented to the Biocon Foundation founded by **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw.**

## 14TH INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL

❖ The **14th International Children's Film Festival** of Bangladesh (ICFFB) came to an end in Dhaka. A total of 12 awards were presented to the winners at the concluding ceremony.



❖ **179 films from 37 countries** were shown at various venues during the 7-day long festival organised by the **Children's Film Society (CFS) of Bangladesh.**

❖ Apart from Bangladesh, films from **India, Armenia, US, UK, Ireland, Japan and China** among others were shown in the course of the festival.



## SKOCH CHIEF MINISTER OF THE YEAR AWARD

❖ The **Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy** has been conferred the **Skoch Chief Minister of the Year Award**.



❖ The Award has been presented to the CM by **Chairman, Skoch Group, Sameer Kochhar** personally at Tadepalli in Andhra Pradesh. The award selection was based on a study of project-level outcomes in various States.

❖ Similarly, initiatives have been **taken across the government to respond to COVID-19** and have shown desirable outcomes. All the above and more is evident in a year-long study of 123 projects from **across sectors in Andhra Pradesh**.

❖ The **State has taken several revolutionary measures** in the past two years to make governance more efficient and transparent. Innovative measures have been taken across sectors, the **credit for which goes to the Chief Minister**.

## ROBERT IRWIN HAS WON THE WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

❖ **Robert Irwin**, an Australian **wildlife photographer**, has won the first prize in the **Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award Contest**.



❖ Robert won the award **for the image titled 'bushfire'**, which is the picture of the devastating **Australian Bushfire in 2020**, he captured using a drone, near the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in Cape York, Queensland.

- ❖ **Irwin's image** was chosen from a shortlist of 25 finalists that received a total of 55,486 votes. The **Wildlife Photographer of the Year** is the largest wildlife photography competition in the world, organised by the **Natural History Museum**.

## ACI WORLD'S VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER AWARD

- ❖ The **Bangalore International Airport Limited's (BIAL)** or Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru has bagged global recognition from the **Airports Council International World's 'Voice of the Customer'** award.



- ❖ The **'Voice of the Customer'** recognises airports that continued to prioritise their customers and remained committed to ensuring that their voice was heard during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.
- ❖ **BLR Airport** has made significant efforts in gathering passenger feedback through ACI's **Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programme** and this helped better understand the customers and demonstrate **BIAL's commitment towards delivering a superior customer experience** under trying circumstances.

## UNION BANK OF INDIA WINS HRD CONGRESS AWARD

- ❖ Union Bank of India was awarded "Best Service Provider" in Human Resources and also the best institution for "Excellence in Learning & Development" at the **29th Global HRD Congress awards**.



- ❖ **Kalyan Kumar, Chief General Manager, HR** was named as "**Chief Human Resources Officer of the Year**".

❖ **Global HRD Congress Awards** are given to institutions annually for the best **HR practices under different categories**. The eminent jury which consists of the best in the industry will select the **organizations taking into account their remarkable achievements in HR**.

- Union Bank of India Headquarters: **Mumbai**.
- Union Bank of India CEO: **Rajkiran Rai G**.

## DADASAHEB PHALKE INT. FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS

❖ The **prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival awards 2021** were announced, to honour the best in Indian cinema, television, music, and OTT.

❖ Late actor **Sushant Singh Rajput** was posthumously awarded '**Critics Best Actor**' for his performance in **Dil Bechara**.



*The winner of the Award for 2021 is as follows:*

- Best Actor (Female): **Deepika Padukone, Chhapaak**
- Best Actor (Male): **Akshay Kumar, Laxmii**
- Critic's Best Actress: **Kiara Advani, Guilty**
- Critic's Best Actor: **Late Sushant Singh Rajput, Dil Bechara**
- Best Film: **Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior**



# SPORTS

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## BCCI CANCELS RANJI TROPHY FOR THE FIRST TIME

❖ The **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** has decided not to conduct the **Ranji Trophy in 2020-21**.

❖ This will be the first time in 87 years since its inception in 1934-35, that India's premier first-class cricket national championship will not be held in 2020-21 domestic season.

❖ **Instead on Ranji Trophy**, BCCI has decided to conduct the **Vijay Hazare Trophy 50-over tournament** and Senior Women's One Day tournament after the completion of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament.



## TAMIL NADU WONS SYED MUSHTAQ ALI T20 TROPHY

❖ **Tamil Nadu beat Baroda in the final to win the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy 2020-21**. The tournament was the twelfth edition of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and was played at **Sardar Patel Stadium (Motera Stadium), Ahmedabad**.



❖ The Player of the match title was won by **Manimaran Siddharth (Tamil Nadu)** who picked 4 wickets, conceding 20 runs. They needed 121 runs to win, which they achieved in 18 overs with 7 wickets.

❖ **Tamil Nadu team** was lead by **Dinesh Karthik (captain)**. This is the second Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) title for Tamil Nadu and their first title in 13 years. The team claimed their first **SMAT title in 2006-07**, that too under **Karthik's captaincy**.

❖ **Syed Mushtaq Ali** was an Indian cricketer, a right-handed opening batsman who holds the distinction of scoring the **first overseas Test century by an Indian player** when he scored 112 against England at Old Trafford in 1936.

## RISHABH PANT WON INAUGURAL ICC PLAYER

❖ The **Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant** has won the **inaugural ICC Player of the Month** award 2021.



❖ Pant has been honoured for his superlative performances in the two Tests against Australia in January 2021, wherein he scored a 97 at Sydney and an unbeaten 89 at Brisbane, leading India to an incredible series win.

❖ Apart from this, **Shabnim Ismail of South Africa** has been named the **ICC Women's Player of the Month** following her performances across three ODIs and two T20Is in January 2021.

## STEVE SMITH CLAIMS ALLAN BORDER MEDAL

❖ **Former Australian captain Steve Smith** won the third Allan Border Medal of his career at the Australian Cricket Awards for the period 2020-21.



❖ The **Allan Border Medal** recognises the most outstanding male Australian cricketer of the past season as voted by his peers, the media and umpires.

❖ Apart from this, **Beth Mooney bagged Belinda Clarke Award**, the top honour for a female player at the Australian Cricket Awards. This is the maiden **Belinda Clarke Award for Mooney**.

## KING XI PUNJAB RENAMED AS PUNJAB KINGS



- ❖ The **IPL Franchise**, Kings XI Punjab has formally been renamed as Punjab Kings ahead of the Indian Premier League auction. .
- ❖ The new brand name and logo of the team was officially released by the management. The **Punjab-based IPL franchise ‘Punjab Kings’** is co-owned by **Bollywood actress Preity Zinta**, along with businessman Ness Wadia, Mohit Burman and Karn Paul.
- ❖ The side is currently **led by batsman KL Rahul**, with former Indian captain Anil Kumble as its head coach.

## MANIKA BATRA WON NATIONAL TABLE TENNIS

- ❖ **Manika Batra won the 82nd National Senior Table Tennis Championship.** She defeated Reeth Rishya at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Panchkula.



- ❖ Batra will now participate in **two WTT (World Team Tennis)** contender competitions starting on February 28th. Next are the World Olympic Qualifiers and the **Asian Olympic Qualifiers** scheduled to be held in Doha on March 14th and 18.
- ❖ **Manika Batra:** She is a **table tennis player in India.** As of November 2020, she is the highest-ranked female table tennis player. She is ranked 63rd in the world.
- ❖ The player specializes in long-pimples on her backhand. Top players usually don't play. In 2020, **she also won the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.**
- ❖ **Achievements of Manika:** She won a silver medal in the 2011 **Chile Open (under 21) category.** She also represented India in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. **She completed the quarter-finals.**

- ❖ She also participated in the 2014 Asian Games. In 2015, Manika Batra won three medals at the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships. In 2018, she was the only Indian to receive the "**Breakthrough Star Award**" from ITTF.

## DJOKOVIĆ & OSAKA WINS AUSTRALIAN OPEN

- ❖ In tennis, **Japan's Naomi Osaka won her fourth Grand Slam title** on February 20, 2021, after she beat **American Jennifer Brady** in the women's singles game of the Australian Open final 2021.



- ❖ **The four Grand Slam title for Osaka comes two Australian Open titles (2021 and 2019) and two US Open title (2018 and 2020).**
- ❖ In Men's singles final, **Novak Djokovic claimed his ninth Australian Open crown** and the 18th Major Grand slam overall, as he **defeated Daniil Medvedev.**

## WORLD'S BIGGEST CRICKET STADIUM SET FOR 1ST MATCH

- ❖ The **biggest cricket stadium in the world will hold its first international match**, with the newly renovated **Sardar Patel Stadium** to host the third Test between India and England.



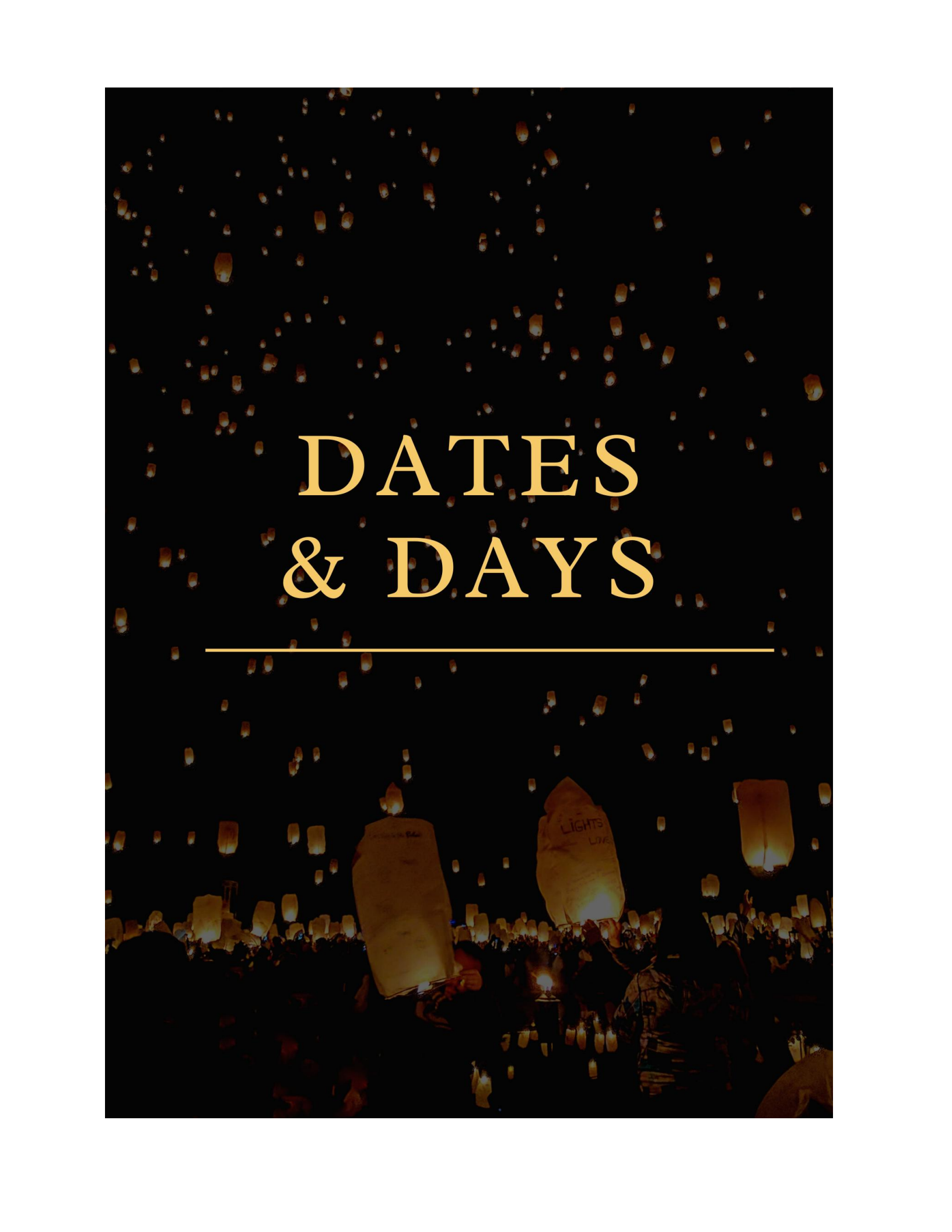
- ❖ Both **India and England** had a forgettable outing in their last pink-ball outings. The stadium is **also known as Motera Stadium**, the venue in Ahmedabad was first opened in the early 1980s but has recently been rebuilt and now has a seating capacity of 110,000.
- ❖ **Motera currently is the biggest cricket stadium in the world** in terms of capacity. The last time when India played a cricket match at Motera was way back in 2014.



## 2ND KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES IN KARNATAKA

- ❖ The second edition of the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) 2021, is scheduled to be held in Karnataka.
- ❖ This announcement was made by the Karnataka Chief Minister, Shri BS Yediyurappa and Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Kiren Rijiju.
- ❖ The **KIUG-2021** will be hosted by **JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru**, in partnership with the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).



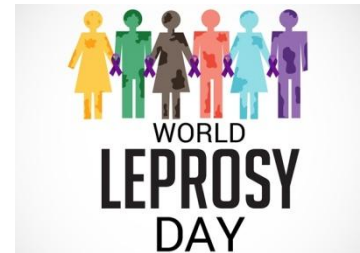


# DATES & DAYS

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## WORLD LEPROSY DAY: 31ST JANUARY

❖ **World Leprosy Day** is observed around the world on the **last Sunday of January every year**. This year **World Leprosy Day** held on 31 January.

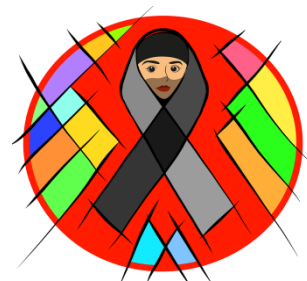


- ❖ The day is celebrated to raise global awareness of this **deadly ancient disease** and call attention to the fact that it can be prevented, treated and cured.
- ❖ This year theme of World Leprosy Day 2021 is “**Beat Leprosy, End Stigma and advocate for Mental Wellbeing**”.
- ❖ The day was initiated in **1954 by French philanthropist and writer, Raoul Follereau**, as a tribute to the life of the Mahatma Gandhi who had compassion for people afflicted with leprosy.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE

❖ International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female is observed globally on 6 February.

❖ This day is sponsored by the **United Nations** for their efforts to **eradicate female genital mutilation**. It was first introduced in 2003.



❖ This year theme of International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female: **No Time for Global Inaction: Unite, Fund, and Act to End Female Genital Mutilation**.

- ❖ Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve **altering or injuring the female genitalia** for non-medical reasons and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights, the health and the integrity of girls and women. .

## WORLD WETLANDS DAY OBSERVED GLOBALLY

- ❖ **World Wetlands Day** is observed every year on **February 2 globally**. The day aims to raise awareness about the crucial role played by wetlands for people and our planet.



- ❖ The **international theme for World Wetlands Day 2021** is **‘Wetlands and Water’**. 2021 marks 50 years of the Convention on Wetlands.
- ❖ The day is celebrated to mark the date of the adoption of the **Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971**, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. World Wetlands Day was first celebrated in 1997.

## 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIAN COAST GUARD

- ❖ The **45th Anniversary of the Indian Coast Guard** was observed on February 01, 2021. February 1st is the anniversary of the Indian Coast Guard.



- ❖ The **Indian Coast Guard** is a **maritime law enforcement agency** and a search and rescue agency designed to protect India’s long coastline and maritime interests.
- ❖ It was established in 1977. Currently, there are 156 ships and 62 aircraft in the army's inventory. As the **fourth largest coast guard in the world**, the **Indian Coast Guard**

plays an important role in ensuring the safety of India's coast and enforcing Indian maritime regulations. Its motto is "**Vayam Rakshamah**", which means "**We Protect**".

## WORLD CANCER DAY OBSERVED ON 4TH FEBRUARY

- ❖ World Cancer Day is observed every year on 4 February by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)**.
- ❖ The day is celebrated to raise awareness and education about cancer, and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the disease. **World Cancer Day 2019-21 theme: 'I Am And I Will'**.
- ❖ Created in 2000, **World Cancer Day** has grown into a positive movement for everyone, everywhere to unite under one voice to face one of our greatest challenges in history.
  - Union for International Cancer Control Headquarters in: **Geneva, Switzerland**
  - Founded: **1933**



## WORLD PULSES DAY OBSERVED ON 10TH FEBRUARY

- ❖ The **United Nations** designated **World Pulses Day** is observed every year on 10 February. The day has been established by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations** to recognize the importance of pulses (dry beans, lentils, dry peas, chickpeas, lupins) as a global food.
- ❖ The theme, "**Nutritious Seeds for a Sustainable Future,**" was decided back in 2016 when the year was nominated to be celebrated as International Year of Pulses.



- ❖ Since then, the **theme has remained the same from 2019 to 2021**. In 2018, the UN General Assembly decided to mark 10 February as World Pulses Day. The **first WPD was held on February 10, 2019**.

## WORLD UNANI DAY: 11TH FEBRUARY

- ❖ **World Unani Day** has observed every year on **11th February**. The main objective of **World Unani Day** is to spread awareness about health care delivery through the **Unani system of medicine** through its preventive and curative philosophy.



- ❖ This day is celebrated every year to mark the birth anniversary of **great Unani scholar and social reformer Hakim Ajmal Khan**. The first Unani Day was celebrated in 2017 at **Central Research Institute of Unani Medicine (CRIUM), Hyderabad**.
- ❖ It has the **largest number of Unani educational, research and health care institutions**. The Unani system of medicine originated in Greece. Its foundation was laid by Hippocrates.

## INTERNATIONAL EPILEPSY DAY OBSERVED ON 8TH FEB

- ❖ The **International Epilepsy Day** is observed on the second Monday of February every year across the world. In 2021, the **International Epilepsy Day was observed on February 08**.



- ❖ The day is organised jointly by the International **Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE)** and the International **League against Epilepsy (ILAE)** to raise awareness about epilepsy and highlight the kinds of problems faced by victims, their friends and family.

- ❖ Epilepsy is a **neurological disorder** which makes a person go through **sudden and recurrent episodes** of sensory disturbances.

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY OBSERVED ON 13TH FEB

- ❖ In India, the National Women's Day is observed every year on 13 February to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Sarojini Naidu**.



- ❖ This year **Nation celebrates its 142nd Birth Anniversary**. She was born on February 13, 1879. She was famous for her nickname '**Nightingale of India**' or '**Bharat Kokila**' because of her poems. Sarojini Naidu was not only a freedom fighter, but she also became the **first woman governor of the United Provinces, the present Uttar Pradesh**.
- ❖ She was one of the forefront leaders who led the **Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement**. She was an important figure in India's struggle for independence from colonial rule.

## WORLD RADIO DAY: 13TH FEBRUARY

- ❖ **World Radio Day** is celebrated on **13 February** each year to recognize radio as a powerful medium, which brings people together from every corner of the globe, to promote diversity and help build a **more peaceful and inclusive world**.



- ❖ The theme of World Radio Day 2021 is "**New World, New Radio**". On the occasion of World Radio Day 2021 (**WRD 2021**), UNESCO calls on radio stations to celebrate this event's 10th anniversary and the more than **110 years of radio through three sub-themes**.

- ❖ The day was Proclaimed in 2011 by the **Member States of UNESCO** and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 as an International Day, **February 13 became World Radio Day (WRD)**.

## INTERNATIONAL MOTHER TONGUE DAY: 21ST FEBRUARY

- ❖ Since 2000, an **International Mother Tongue Day has been held on February 21** every year to promote the diversity of languages and cultures and the use of multiple languages.
- ❖ The idea of celebrating International Mother Tongue Day is an initiative of Bangladesh. **It was approved at the UNESCO General Conference in 1999** and has been observed all over the world since 2000.
- ❖ UNESCO celebrates "**Language without Borders**" on International Mother Tongue Day 2020.
- ❖ The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2008** as the **International Year of Languages**. 40% of the global population cannot receive education in a language they speak or understand.



## WORLD THINKING DAY: 22ND FEBRUARY

- ❖ **World Thinking Day**, originally known as **Thinking Day**, is celebrated **annually on 22 February** by all **Girl Scouts, Girl Guides and other girl groups worldwide**.
- ❖ The **day is observed to think about fellow brothers and sisters** around the world, address their concerns and understand the true meaning of guiding.

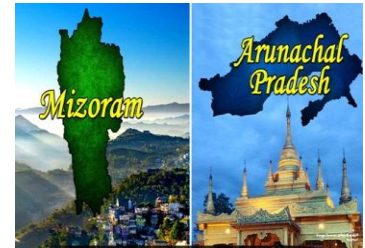




- ❖ The theme for **World Thinking Day 2021 is peacebuilding**. Peacebuilding is at the heart of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting and is as vital and relevant today as for the last 100 years.

## ARUNACHAL PRADESH & MIZORAM STATEHOOD DAY

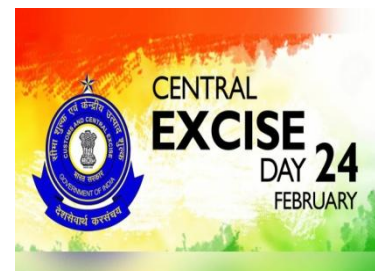
- ❖ **Northeast Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram** celebrates the anniversary of the founding of the nation. The two countries were established on February 20, 1987.



- ❖ **Arunachal Pradesh:** On this occasion, President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, **Federal Minister and Chief Minister** wish the states. Arunachal Pradesh It is a state in northeastern India.
- ❖ **Mizoram:** The name of the state is derived from the word Mizo, the land in the **language of Mizo**. "Mizoram" means "**the land of Mizos**". The state is located in the old **Assam region of northeast India**. It is the most inland state in India. It borders three of the seven sister states of Old Assam, **namely Assam, Tripura and Manipur**.
- ❖ The state of Mizoram also shares border internationally with **Bangladesh and Myanmar**, with a total length of 722 kilometers. It was not until **1972 that the state became part of Assam**.

## CENTRAL EXCISE DAY OBSERVED ON 24TH FEBRUARY

- ❖ **Central Excise Day** is celebrated every year on February 24 across India. The day is being celebrated to honour the service of the **Central Board of Excise and Custom (CBEC)** to the country.



- ❖ The **day is celebrated to honour the officers associated with CBEC and their services.** This is done to encourage the officers to carry out their duties with utmost sincerity.
  
- ❖ The officers, every year perform checking of corruption in goods from the manufacturing sector. The day is celebrated to commemorate the legislation of the **Central Excise and Salt act on 24 February 1944.**
  
- ❖ The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs** is formerly known as the Central Board of Excise and Customs. The Customs and Central Excise/ Central GST department was established to administer customs laws.



# REPORT & INDEXES

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## 2020 WORST YEAR ON RECORD: UNWTO

- ❖ The **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** emphasized that 2020 is the worst year on record.
- ❖ The **United Nations World Tourism Organization** issued this statement because the international travel ban implemented to curb the **COVID-19 outbreak** has dealt a heavy blow to the global tourism industry.
- ❖ According to the report, **the number of international arrivals fell by 74%**. In addition, compared with 2019, the number of international arrivals allowed to global destinations has decreased by 1 billion.



## INDIA RANKED 53RD IN EIU'S DEMOCRACY INDEX

- ❖ **India's position** has slipped by two places to be placed at **53rd spot in the 2020 Democracy Index**, from among 167 countries. The **overall score of India is 6.61 in the Index**, on a scale of 0-10. India has been classified as a 'flawed democracy'.



- ❖ **Democracy Index** is the global ranking released by The **Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)** that provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide. **Norway has topped the Index**. Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada are the top five countries on the list.

## BHIM ARMY CHIEF NAMED IN TIME'S LIST

- ❖ **Bhim Army Chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad** and five Indian-origin personalities have been featured in the 2021 **TIME100 Next**.

- ❖ **TIME100 Next 2021** is the second edition of the annual list of **Time magazine's 100 'emerging leaders** who are shaping the future.'
- ❖ **Bhim Army is a Dalit rights organisation** based in Uttar Pradesh to help Dalits escape poverty through education. It was founded by **Satish Kumar, Vijay Ratan Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad in 2015.**

## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

### IEA RELEASED INDIA ENERGY OUTLOOK 2021

Recently, the **International Energy Agency (IEA)** has released the **India Energy Outlook 2021** Report which explores the opportunities and challenges ahead for India as it seeks to ensure reliable, affordable and sustainable energy for a growing population. The **India Energy Outlook 2021** is a new special report from the **IEA's World Energy Outlook** series.



### THIRD LARGEST ENERGY CONSUMER BY 2030

India will make up the **biggest share of energy demand growth at 25%** over the next two decades, as it **overtakes the European Union as the world's third-biggest energy consumer** by 2030. Presently, India is the fourth-largest global energy consumer behind China, the United States and the European Union. **India's energy consumption** is expected to nearly double as the **nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** expands to an **estimated USD 8.6 trillion by 2040** under its current national policy scenario. Prior to the global pandemic, India's energy demand was projected to increase **by almost 50% between 2019 and 2030**, but growth over this period is now closer to 35%.

**Industrialization is a Major Driving Force:** Over the last three decades, India accounted for about **10% of World Growth in Industrial Value-added** [in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)]

terms]. By 2040, India is set to account for almost **20% of Global Growth in Industrial value-added**, and to lead global growth in industrial final energy consumption, especially in steelmaking.

**Reliance on Imports:** India's growing energy needs will make it more reliant on fossil fuel imports as its domestic oil and gas production has been stagnant for years despite government policies to promote petroleum exploration and production and renewable energy. Rising oil demand could **double India's oil import bill to about USD 181 billion by 2030** and nearly treble it to **USD 255 billion by 2040 compared with 2019**.

**Oil Demand:** India's oil demand is **seen rising by 74% to 8.7 million barrels per day by 2040** under the existing policies scenario. A five-fold increase in per capita car ownership will result in India leading the oil demand growth in the world. Its net dependence on oil imports - taking into account both the import of crude oil and the export of oil products - **increases to more than 90% by 2040 from the current 75%** as domestic consumption rises much more than production.

**Gas Demand:** India will become the fastest-growing market for Natural gas, **with demand more than tripling by 2040**. Natural gas import dependency increased from 20% in 2010 to almost 50% in 2019 and is set to grow further to more than 60% in 2040.

**Coal Demand:** Coal currently dominates India's electricity sector, **accounting for over 70% of overall generation**. Coal demand is seen rising to **772 million tonnes in 2040 from the current 590**.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

- **Renewables Energy Resources Demand:** India's share in the growth in renewable energy is the **second-largest in the world, after China**.

- **Sustainable:** Energy generated from renewable sources will be cleaner and greener and more sustainable.
- **Employment opportunities:** Inclusion of a newer technology simply means more employment opportunities for the **working population of the country.**
- **Market assurance:** From the economy point of view, renewable sources provide the **market and revenue assurance which no other resources can provide.**
- **Power supply: Providing 24\*7 power supply to 100% of the households,** sustainable form of transports are some of the goals that can only be achieved through sustainable power that comes from renewables.

## INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

The **International Energy Agency** is an autonomous **Intergovernmental Organisation established in 1974 in Paris, France.** IEA mainly focuses on its energy policies which include economic development, energy security and environmental protection. **These policies are also known as the 3 E's of IEA.**



India became an Associate member of IEA in March 2017 but it was in engagement with IEA long before its association with the organization. Recently, India has inked a **Strategic Partnership Agreement with the IEA to strengthen cooperation** in global energy security, stability and sustainability. The **World Energy Outlook Report** is released by the IEA annually. **IEA Clean Coal Centre** is dedicated to providing independent information and analysis on how coal can become a cleaner source of energy, compatible with the **UN Sustainable Development Goals.**

## CONCLUSION

As the **world seeks ways to accelerate the pace of transformation** in the energy sector, India is in a unique position to pioneer a new model for **low-carbon, inclusive growth**. If this can be done, it will show the way for a **whole group of energy-hungry** developing economies, by demonstrating that robust economic expansion is fully compatible with an increasing pace of emissions reductions and the achievement of other development goals. India is already a global leader in solar power, and solar combined with batteries will play a massive part in India's energy future. But **India will need a whole host of technologies and policies to chart this new path**. As new industrial sectors emerge and clean energy jobs grow, India will also need to ensure that no one is left behind, including in those regions that are **heavily dependent on coal today**.

## CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX (CPI) 2020

India's rank has slipped six places to **86th among 180 countries** in **Corruption Perception Index (CPI)** released by **Transparency International**. India was ranked 80th out of 180 countries in 2019.

The **index ranks 180 countries** and territories by the perceived level of public sector corruption according to experts and business

people. It uses a **scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)**. CPI 2020 paints a grim picture of the state of corruption worldwide. While most countries have made little to no progress in tackling corruption in nearly a decade, **more than two-thirds of countries score below 50**, with an average score of just 43. Moreover, corruption not only undermines the **global health response to Cover-19** but contributes to a **continuing crisis of democracy**.



## BACKGROUND OF THE INDEX

The **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** is an index published annually by **Berlin-based Transparency International** since 1995 which ranks countries "by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys. The **CPI generally defines corruption as "the misuse of public power for private benefit"**. The 2020 CPI, published in January of 2021, currently ranks 180 countries "**on a scale from 100 (very**



**clean) to 0 (highly corrupt)"** based on the situation between May 2019 and May 2020. In the list, **Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, Singapore and Switzerland** are perceived as the top 6 least corrupt nations in the world, ranking consistently high among international financial transparency, while the most perceived corrupt country in the world is Somalia, **scoring 8–10 out of 100 since 2012**. South Sudan is also perceived as one of the most corrupt countries in the world due to constant social and economic crises, ranking an average score of 13 out of 100 in 2018.

## PERFORMANCE IN THE INDEX

- **Top Performers:** The top countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) are **Denmark and New Zealand**, with scores of 88, followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland, with scores of 85 each.
- **Poor Performers:** **South Sudan and Somalia** are the bottom Countries with scores of 12 each, followed by **Syria (14), Yemen (15) and Venezuela (15)**.
- **Regional Specific:** The highest scoring region is Western Europe and the European Union with an average score of 66. **The lowest scoring regions are Sub-Saharan Africa (32) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (36)**.
- **India Specific:** In 2020, India's score is 40 (41 in 2019). India experienced slow progress in **anti-corruption efforts**, with several government commitments to reform not yet materialising effectively.

## CORRUPTION, HEALTH & COVID-19

**Corruption shifts public spending** away from essential public services. Countries with higher levels of **corruption, regardless of economic development**, tend to spend less on health. Higher levels of corruption are associated with lower universal health care coverage and higher rates of **infant and maternal mortality and deaths from cancer**, diabetes, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Corruption is one of the key barriers to achieving the **United Nations'**

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, and the covid-19 pandemic is making those goals even more difficult to attain. **Covid-19 is not just a health and economic crisis**, but a corruption crisis as well, with countless lives lost due to the insidious effects of corruption undermining a fair and equitable global response. The Covid-19 response **exposed vulnerabilities of weak oversight and inadequate transparency**. Countries with higher levels of corruption tend to be the worst perpetrators of democratic and rule-of-law breaches **while managing the COVID-19 crisis**. Governments exploiting the pandemic to suspend parliaments, renounce public accountability mechanisms, and incite violence against dissidents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Strengthen oversight institutions to ensure resources** reach those most in need. **Anti-corruption authorities** and oversight institutions must have sufficient funds, resources and **independence to perform their duties**. Ensure open and transparent contracting to combat wrong doing, identify conflicts of interest and ensure fair pricing. **Defend Democracy, Promote Civic Space** by enabling civil society groups and the media to hold governments accountable. Publish relevant data and guarantee access to information to ensure the public receives **easy, accessible, timely and meaningful information**.

## ABOUT TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

**Transparency International is a German non-governmental organization** founded in 1993. Based in Berlin, its nonprofit purpose is to take action to combat global corruption with civil societal anti-corruption measures and to prevent criminal activities arising from corruption. Its most notable publications include the **Global Corruption Barometer and the Corruption Perceptions Index**. Transparency International has the legal status of a **German registered voluntary association (Eingetragener Verein)** and serves as an umbrella organization. Its members have grown from a few individuals to more than 100 national chapters which engage in fighting corruption in their home countries. **TI is a member of G20 Think Tanks**, UNESCO Consultative Status, United Nations Global Compact, Sustainable Development Solutions

Network and shares the goals of peace, justice, strong institutions and partnerships of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)**. TI confirmed the dis-accreditation of the national chapter of the United States of America in 2017. According to the **2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report**, Transparency International was number 9 of 100 in the Top Think Tanks Worldwide (non-U.S.) category and number 27 of 150 in the **Top Think Tanks Worldwide (U.S. and non-U.S.) category**.





# SCIENCE & TECH.

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## HAL'S SECOND LIGHT COMBAT AIRCRAFT TEJAS

- ❖ Defence minister **Rajnath Singh** has inaugurated **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) second Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-Tejas** production line in Bengaluru, ahead of the upcoming Aero India 2021.



- ❖ The deal to be signed in the next few days with HAL would strengthen the **Indian Air Force's fleet of homegrown fighter jet 'LCA-Tejas'** and overall combat capability.
- ❖ Last month, the **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, had approved the largest indigenous defence procurement deal worth about Rs 48,000 crores to buy **83 LCA Tejas Mark1A fighter jets**.

## AERO INDIA 2021 BEGINS IN BENGALURU

- ❖ The **Aero India 2021** event, country's premier aerospace and defence exhibition, kick-started at **Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru**.



- ❖ The 13th edition of the international event touted as the **world's first-ever hybrid aero and defence show** will see several aircraft of the **Indian Air Force (IAF)**, Army, Navy, Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL), and the Coast Guard participating in the show.
- ❖ This 13th edition will see a combination of both physical and virtual exhibition with 601 exhibitors, including 523 from India and 78 from 14 foreign countries. **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited** would exhibit its **Aatmanirbhar Formation Flight**.

## HAL DEVELOPS HIGH ALTITUDE PSEUDO SATELLITE

- ❖ The **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited** (HAL) is developing a futuristic **high altitude pseudo satellite** with a start-up company, to strengthen the country's military strike capabilities.



- ❖ It is a first of its kind project in the world, where a **manned aircraft will operate within the boundary** and the **unmanned aircraft will enter the enemy zone** and can carry out strikes deep inside the enemy territory.
- ❖ Capable of autonomous functions, these unmanned aerial vehicles will also have all the manoeuvring capabilities. "It can straightway **hit the target at a distance of 700 kilometres** or can go to 350 kilometres and come back.

## CHINA'S TIANWEN-1 ENTERS MARS ORBIT

- ❖ On February 10, 2021, a **Chinese spacecraft named "Tianwen 1"** successfully entered Mars orbit. The **probe entered MARS orbit** after 6 and a half months from Earth.



- ❖ This is **China's first independent mission on the Red Planet.** After arriving near the track, the robot probe started and completed the 15-minute combustion of the thruster. The **combustion of the propeller slows the speed of the spacecraft**, so it can be captured by the gravity of Mars.
- ❖ The **Astro One mission** will attempt to send the landing module, which is rapidly descending for 7 minutes to carry a 240 kg rover. The **rover will be sent to the northern hemisphere** of Mars, called **Utopia**.

## ISRO LAUNCHED SATELLITE TESTING FOR PRIVATE ONES

❖ **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has opened its **UR Rao Satellite Centre** for testing satellites developed by the private sector for the first time in its history.

❖ Two satellites, developed by the Indian startups **SpaceKidz India and Pixxel (incorporated as Sygyzy)** were tested at the UR Rao Satellite Centre.



❖ **ISRO** also helped these two companies in fixing problems with the solar panels on their respective satellites. So far in **its history, the space agency has only taken help in manufacturing and fabrication** of various parts of satellites and rockets from the Indian industry.

❖ Both these two companies will also test their engines at the **Sriharikota spaceport and Thiruvananthapuram** rocket centre in coming days.

## DRDO TEST-FIRED HELINA AND DHRUVA STRA ATGM

❖ **Defence Research and Development Organisation** has successfully carried out joint user trials of indigenously developed **Helina and Dhruvastra Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM)** from the Advanced Light Helicopter at the **Pokhran deserts in Rajasthan.**



❖ **Helena is the Army version and Dhruvastra** is the Air Force version of the ALH. The missile systems have been designed and developed indigenously by the **Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).**

- ❖ The **Helina and Dhruvastra** are the **third generation**, “Lock-on-Before-Launch (LOBL)” fire and forget ATGMs that can engage targets both indirect hit mode as well as top attack mode. The missile systems have all-weather day-and-night capability.

## L&T DELIVERS 100TG K9 VAJRA HOWITZER

- ❖ **Army Chief Gen Manoj Naravane** has flagged off the 100th K9 Vajra tracked self-propelled howitzer built by **Larsen & Toubro (L&T)** at its armoured system complex at Hazira in Gujarat.



- ❖ L&T had completed the delivery of all the howitzers under the **contract awarded in May 2017 ahead of schedule.**
- ❖ The **K9 Vajra programme** involved the delivery of **100 howitzers** with associated engineering support package covering spares, system documentation and training. It also involves the maintenance transfer of technology to an army base workshop to support the howitzers throughout their operational life cycle.





# MISCELLANEOUS

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## WORLD'S FIRST ENERGY ISLAND IN DENMARK

- ❖ The **Government of Denmark** has approved a project to **build the world's first energy island**, in the **North Sea** that will produce and store enough green energy to meet the electricity needs of three million households in European countries.



- ❖ The hub **will strengthen the integration of Europe's power grids** and increase renewable electricity production necessary for a **climate-neutral Europe**.
- ❖ The **energy hub will serve as an offshore power plant gathering and distributing green electricity** from hundreds of wind turbines surrounding the island directly to consumers in countries surrounding the North Sea.
- ❖ It is the long-term ambition to be able to **store green electricity on the island, convert it to liquid green fuel**, and send it via subsea cables to **Denmark and neighbouring countries**.

## HUNTER BIDEN TO RELEASE A MEMOIR

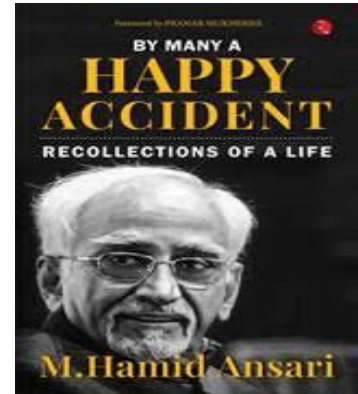
- ❖ United States President **Joe Biden's** son, Hunter Biden, is publishing his memoir titled "**Beautiful Things**", which narrates about his struggles with **addiction and drug abuse**.



- ❖ The book is scheduled to be published in the United States on April 6 by Gallery Books, an imprint of **Simon & Schuster**.
- ❖ The 51-year-old Hunter Biden has narrated his personal story about how he was a drug addict- from his first sips of alcohol as a child, when he was dealing with the aftermath of a family tragedy, to his crack-cocaine use and how he fixed that problem.

## FORMER VICE- PRESIDENT RELEASES HIS BOOK

- ❖ A book titled **‘By Many a Happy Accident: Recollections of a Life’** has been authored by **M Hamid Ansari**. Mohammad Hamid Ansari was the vice president of India and chairman of the Rajya Sabha for two consecutive terms from 2007 to 2017.
- ❖ A former diplomat, he served as ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, as high commissioner to Australia and as **permanent representative to the United Nations in New York**.
- ❖ The **book is an account of a life of unplanned happenings that took M. Hamid Ansari** away from his preferred fancy for academia to professional diplomacy and then be co-opted in public life and catapulted to the **second-highest office in the land for two consecutive terms**.



## JUAL ORAM'S BOOK ECONOMIC AWARENESS IN INDIA

- ❖ **Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Defence and MP Jual Oram** has launched **‘Turn Around India: 2020- Surmounting Past Legacy’**, a book on creating economic awareness among masses. The book is authored by **RP Gupta**.



- ❖ **‘Turn Around India: 2020’** is an intimate narrative of Gupta’s experiences and how he attained success through sheer hard work and determination.

- ❖ The book provides a practical and viable option for **reviving Indian economy for creating new jobs and enlarging public income** and also, the structural reforms such as fiscal and monetary stimuli for overcoming economic crisis arising due to pandemic.

## VIJAYA NAGAR BECOMES 31ST DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA

- ❖ The **Karnataka government** notified that **Vijayanagara City** has officially become the **31st district** of Karnataka. The headquarters of the region is located in **Hosapete**.



- ❖ Vijayanagara is located in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The area is also home to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Hampi and Virupaksha Temple**.
- ❖ The Vijayanagara region is named after the capital of the **Vijayanagar Empire**. According to the **Karnataka Land Income Act of 1964**, the area was established outside the **ore-rich Barali area**.
- ❖ **Hampi or Hampe is a UNESCO World Heritage Site** located in the east-central part of Karnataka. The site is a Hindu pilgrimage center. The Hampi area was once the capital of the **Vijay Niagara Empire** in the 14th century. **Hampi-Vijayanagara is the second largest medieval city in the world after Beijing**.

## PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS PENS MEMOIR 'UNFINISHED'

- ❖ **Actor-producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas** officially turned author with the release of her first book, **“Unfinished: A Memoir”**, which she described as **“honest, raw and vulnerable”**.

- ❖ The end result is a book, published by the **Michael Joseph imprint**, which covers her dual-continent 20-year-long career as an actor and producer and her work as a **Unicef Goodwill Ambassador**.
- ❖ The memoir promises to offer insights into **Priyanka Chopra Jonas'** childhood in India, her formative teenage years in the US.

## FOSSILS OF EARLIEST KNOWN LIVING ANIMAL

- ❖ **Researchers discovered the three fossils of the earliest known living animal**, the 550-million-year-old **'Dickinsonia'** on the roof of the **Bhimbetka Rock Shelters**. These fossils were found on the roof of the Auditorium Cave of the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters.



- ❖ In September 2018, an **international team of researchers** claimed to have discovered the **world's oldest Dickinsonia fossil**, which appeared approximately 571 million to 541 million years ago.
- ❖ The current fossil evidence can be traced back to Dickinsonia about **100 million years ago**. It is an extinct genus of basal animal. It lived in the late Ediacaran period and is now Australia, Russia and Ukraine.
- ❖ These creatures are believed to represent the **earliest flowering of complex multicellular life on Earth**. They originated in a world without predators and did not require hard protective carapaces or skeletons.
- ❖ The **discovery of cholesterol molecules in Dickinsonia's fossils** helps people think that Dickinsonia was an animal. This further proves the similar paleoenvironment and confirms the **550 Ma (mega annum) mainland assembly of Gondwana**.

## HYDERABAD-TREE CITY OF THE WORLD 2020

❖ The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of the United Nations (UN) and the **Arbor Day Foundation** have confirmed **Hyderabad as the 2020 Tree City of the World.**



❖ Hyderabad is committed to the development and maintenance of urban forests, so it was awarded this honor. This recognition is a **testament to New York City's ongoing and institutional efforts** to plant trees, cultivate and celebrate trees.

❖ Most cities are from the **United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.** After receiving World Tree City recognition, the city of Hyderabad will join a network of like-minded cities that recognize the importance of trees.

## BHIM ARMY CHIEF NAMED IN TIME'S LIST

❖ **Bhim Army Chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad** and five Indian-origin personalities have been featured in the 2021 **TIME100 Next.**



❖ **TIME100 Next 2021** is the second edition of the annual list of **Time magazine's 100 'emerging leaders** who are shaping the future.'

❖ **Bhim Army is a Dalit rights organisation** based in Uttar Pradesh to help Dalits escape poverty through education. It was founded by **Satish Kumar, Vijay Ratan Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad in 2015.**

## KUSHINAGAR AIRPORT IN GETS CLEARANCE OF DGCA

- ❖ The **under-construction Kushinagar Airport in Uttar Pradesh** has received the necessary clearances from aviation regulator **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** to operate international flights.



- ❖ Once operational, **Kushinagar airport will become the third functional international facility** in the state.
- ❖ Currently, the two international airports functional in **Uttar Pradesh** are **Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport** at Lucknow and **Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport** at Varanasi.
- ❖ Kushinagar airport will serve as the closest international airport to several Buddhist pilgrimage sites in **Lumbini, Shravasti, and Kapilvastu**.

## YOUNGEST WOMAN TO ROW SOLO THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

- ❖ A **British woman, Jasmine Harrison of England** has become the youngest woman to row solo across the **Atlantic Ocean**.
- ❖ The 21-year-old from **Thirsk, North Yorkshire in the UK**, achieved the feat by finishing top in the 2020 Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, organized by Atlantic Campaigns.



- ❖ **Harrison**, who is a swim instructor and bartender by profession, travelled 3,000 miles (4,828km) across the **Atlantic Ocean in 70 days, 3 hours and 48 minutes**.

## CHANDIGARH LAUNCHED 'CARBON WATCH' MOBILE APP

❖ **Chandigarh** became the first state or Union Territory in India to **launch Carbon Watch, a mobile application** to assess the carbon footprint of an individual.

❖ Although the app can be accessed by everyone, it has specific options for the **residents of Chandigarh to compile a detailed study.**

❖ The application can be downloaded **through a QR code in Android supported smart cell phones.** Carbon footprint is the amount of greenhouse gases-especially carbon dioxide-released into the atmosphere by particular human activity.



## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

### UTTARAKHAND GLACIER OUTBURST TRAGEDY

**Another massive tragedy struck Uttarakhand** on February 7, 2020 when a glacier burst took place in **Chamoli district of the state.** A large piece of **Nanda Devi glacier** broke off on a chilly winter morning of February and fell into a river, triggering an avalanche and **glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF)** in Dhauli Ganga, Rishi Ganga



and Alaknanda rivers. Over 150 people are feared missing after the flash flood. This is a second massive blow for the Himalayan state after the **2013 Kedarnath Tragedy.** Two hydroelectric power projects, namely, **NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project** and **Rishi Ganga Hydel Project** got completely washed away along with five bridges and scores of houses after the waters came rushing in.

### WHAT IS GLACIER OUTBURST



**Glaciers are a bulk of ice moving** under its weight. It forms in areas where the amassing of snow goes beyond its ablation over many years. They are generally seen in the snow-fields. This **largest freshwater basin** covers around 10% of the land surface of the Earth. According to the topography and the location of the glacier, it can be categorized as per **Continental Glacier (Ice Sheets)**. The Continental Glacier moves outward in all directions whereas the **Mountain Glacier moves from a higher to a lower altitude.**

**Glacial Lakes:** Retreating glaciers, like several in the Himalayas, usually result in the formation of lakes at their tips, called **proglacial lakes, often bound only by sediments and boulders.**

**Flood:** If the boundaries of these lakes are breached, it can lead to large amounts of water rushing down to **nearby streams and rivers, gathering momentum** on the way by picking up sediments, rocks and other material, and resulting in flooding downstream.

**Impact of Climate Change:** Climate change has driven erratic weather patterns like **increased snowfall and rainfall, warmer winters has led to the melting of a lot of snow.** According to the latest assessment reports of the **UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**, glacier retreat and permafrost thaw are projected to decrease the stability of mountain slopes and increase the number and area of glacier lakes. When glaciers break off, the space underneath them develops into a glacial lake filled with water. The breaking off of the glacial lake is termed as **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) or glacial outburst.** The glacial outburst occur when the water level of lake rises or when the glacier retreats. The occurrence of GLOF is very rare. Some experts are calling the **Uttarakhand glacier burst as the GLOF.** However, the researchers and scientists are yet to investigate the real reason behind the incident.

**Cause of Glacier Outburst:** Earthquakes, erosion, volcanic eruptions, build of water pressure or an avalanche of heavy snow can cause the glaciers to burst. The **glacier outburst can also happen** after the displacement of massive water pocket in a glacial lake when an **adjacent glacier retreats into it.**

**UTTARAKHAND GLACIER BURST**

In case of **Uttarakhand glacier burst tragedy**, it is not yet clearly known that what caused the **outburst of Nanda Devi glacier**. As per the experts, the breaking off of this huge chunk of **Nanda Devi glacier into the Dhaul Ganga river** is a rare incident as the **Google Earth images and satellite** did not show any glacial lake underneath the glacier that broke off. Usually, **Glacial Lakes** are formed beneath the big glaciers and flow **within these massive ice sheets**. At times, these lakes create enough pressure causing the glacier chunks to break off.

The glacial lakes are not like usual lakes; they comprise ice boulders that have potential of bursting the glacier banks. In **Uttarakhand glacier burst case**, it is believed that the **water pockets might have developed within the Nanda Devi glacier** that led to this incident. Some experts also link this tragedy to climate change and global warming. **High temperatures and less of snowfall** can lead to increase in melting of glaciers, causing glacial lake water to rise beyond the levels. **A 2019 study published in the Science Advances journal** had warned that the Himalayan glaciers are melting at an alarming speed and **the 2013 Kedarnath-like tragedy may occur again**. The study had warned that glaciers of the Himalayas have been melting twice as fast since the beginning of this century due to the climate change.

The study was based on satellite observations of 40 years **across India, Nepal, Bhutan and China**. The study showed that glaciers have been losing half of their ice every year and the formation of glacial lakes had increased by 50% since 2000.

The formation of increased number of glacial lakes pose an existential threat to Himalayan glaciers and the rivers flowing from near them. **The 2013 Kedarnath tragedy was caused by the cloudbursts that led to severe floods and landslides**. In case of **Uttarakhand Glacier Burst**, it is yet to know what actually triggered the glacier burst at Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

**OTHER RELATED INFORMATION**

- **Dhauliganga:** It originates from **Vasudhara Tal, perhaps the largest glacial lake in Uttarakhand.** Dhauliganga is one of the important tributaries of Alaknanda, the other being the **Nandakini, Pindar, Mandakini and Bhagirathi.** Dhauliganga is joined by the Rishiganga river at Raini. It merges with the **Alaknanda at Vishnuprayag.** There it loses its identity and the Alaknanda flows southwest through **Chamoli, Maithana, Nandaprayag, Karnaprayag** until it meets the Mandakini river, coming from the north at Rudraprayag. After subsuming Mandakini, the Alaknanda carries on past Srinagar, before joining the Ganga at Devprayag. Alaknanda then disappears and the mighty **Ganga carries on its journey,** first flowing south then west through important pilgrimage centres such as Rishikesh and finally descending into the **Indo-Gangetic plains at Haridwar.**
- **Nanda Devi National Park:** It is situated around the **peak of Nanda Devi (7816 m)** in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India. The park encompasses the **Nanda Devi Sanctuary, a glacial basin** surrounded by a ring of peaks, and drained by the Rishi Ganga through the **Rishi Ganga Gorge.** The Park was established as Sanjay Gandhi National Park by Notification in 1982 but was later renamed Nanda Devi National Park. It was inscribed a World Heritage Site by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** in 1988.
- **Flora & Fauna:** Some **312 floral species that include 17 rare species** have been found here. Fir, birch, rhododendron, and juniper are the main flora. **Himalayan black bear, Snow leopard , Himalayan Musk Deer** etc are main fauna

## CONTROVERSY BETWEEN CENTRE & TWITTER



Recently, the **government of India reprimanded Twitter (micro-blogging website)** for not complying with its order to block more than a thousand accounts for alleged spread of provocative content and misinformation on the farmers' protest. The Centre has issued notice to the **micro-blogging site** after it restored more than 250 accounts that had been suspended earlier on the **government's 'legal demand'**. The government **wants the platform (Twitter) to comply with its earlier order** of 31st January, 2021 by which it was asked to block accounts and a controversial hashtag that spoke of an **impending 'genocide' of farmers for allegedly promoting misinformation** about the protests, adversely affecting public order. The micro-blogging site reinstated the accounts and tweets on its own and later refused to go back on the decision, contending that it found no violation of its policy.

## LAWS RELATED TO BLOCKING OF INTERNET CONTENT

***Information Technology Act, 2000:*** In India, the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, as amended from time to time, governs all activities related to the use of computer resources. It covers all 'intermediaries' who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records. The role of the intermediaries has been spelt out in separate rules framed for the purpose in 2011- **The Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011.**

***Section 69 of the IT Act:*** It confers on the Central and State governments the power to issue directions "to intercept, monitor or decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource". The grounds on which these powers may be exercised are: In the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, the security of the state. **Friendly relations with foreign states.** Public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to these. For investigating any offence.

***Process of Blocking Internet Websites:*** Section 69A, for similar reasons and grounds (as stated above), enables the Centre to ask any agency of the government, or any intermediary, **to block access to the public of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored or hosted on any computer resource.** Any such request for blocking access must be based on reasons given in writing.

**Intermediaries as per the IT Act 2000: Intermediary is defined in Section 2(1) (w) of the IT Act 2000.** The term ‘intermediaries’ includes providers of telecom service, network service, Internet service and web hosting, besides search engines, online payment and auction sites, online marketplaces and cyber cafes. It includes any person who, on behalf of another, **“receives, stores or transmits”** any electronic record. Social media platforms would fall under this definition.

## OBLIGATION OF INTERMEDIARIES UNDER THE LAW

**Intermediaries are required to preserve** and retain specified information in a manner and format prescribed by the Centre for a specified duration. Contravention of this provision may attract a prison term that **may go up to three years, besides a fine.** When a direction is given for monitoring, the intermediary and any person in charge of a computer resource should extend technical assistance in the form of **giving access or securing access to the resource involved.** Failure to extend such assistance may entail a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine. **Failure to comply with a direction** to block access to the public on a government’s written request also attracts a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine.



**Liability of Intermediaries:** Section 79 of the IT Act 2000 makes it clear that “an intermediary shall not be liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him”. **Third party information means any information** dealt with by a network service provider in his capacity as an intermediary. This protects intermediaries such as Internet and data service providers and those hosting websites from being made liable for content that users may post or generate. **Sections 79 also introduced the concept of “notice and take down” provision.** It provides that an intermediary would lose its immunity if upon receiving actual knowledge or on being notified that any information, data or communication link residing in or connected to a computer resource controlled by it is being used to commit an unlawful act and it fails to **expeditiously remove or disable access to that material.**

## SC'S STAND ON INTERMEDIARIES IN IT ACT, 2000

In **Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015)**, the Supreme Court read down the provision to mean that the intermediaries ought to act only upon receiving actual knowledge that a court order has been passed, asking [them] to expeditiously remove or disable access to certain material.



**International Requirement:** Most nations have framed laws mandating cooperation by **Internet service providers or web hosting service providers and other intermediaries** to cooperate with law and order authorities in certain circumstances.

**To Fight Cybercrime:** Cooperation between technology services companies and law enforcement agencies is now deemed a vital part of fighting cybercrime and various other crimes that are committed using computer resources. These **cover hacking, digital impersonation and theft of data.**

**To Prevent Misuse of the Internet:** The potential of the misuse has led to law enforcement officials constantly seeking to **curb the ill-effects of using the medium.**