EVENTS

NATIONAL

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

'DIGITAL SEVA SETU PROGRAMME'

Date: 8th October, 2020

The Government of Gujarat has launched the 'Digital Seva Setu Programme' for rural areas.

Key Points:

• The programme aims to offer maximum utilization and benefit of technology for public welfare.

• The programme is initiated by Centre's BharatNet Project which covers the village panchayats through a fibre network.

• The villages will be connected with a 100MBPS optical fibre network technology. Total 10,000 village panchayats will be connected via this high-speed internet technology.

• The programme will offer 20 services including issuance of duplicate ration card, income certificate, senior citizen certificate, caste certificate, etc. Under this programme, these services can be availed by citizens by paying Rs 20 as the fee amount.

• Also, the facility of e-signature is offered. Thus, under this programme, rural people can avail benefits and have necessary documents at just a click of a button of mobile phone.

KERALA TO MAKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMPLETELY DIGITAL

Date: 13th October, 2020

Kerala has become the first state in India to make its public schools completely digital.

Key Points:

- Kerala has achieved this goal within 2 years at a cost of Rs 42.36 crores. Out of this amount, Rs 34.75 crores was contributed by KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board).

- All the public educational schools were converted to digital under the support of KITE (Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education) and KIIFB.

- Under this project, 3,74,274 digital services are distributed in 16027 public schools of Kerala.

- Around 11275 schools are also equipped by high tech labs and more than 12,678 schools are equipped by a high-speed broadband Internet connection.

- Around 45,000 high tech classrooms to 4752 public schools are built under this project.

'TECH FOR TRIBALS' INITIATIVE

Date: 14th October, 2020

The 'Tech for Tribals' initiative is launched by TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India), IIT-Kanpur and Chhattisgarh MFP Federation.

Key Points:

- The initiative is launched with an aim to develop entrepreneurship skills, soft skills, Information Technology (IT) skills and Business Development in the tribal

community.

- For this initiative, TRIFED has joined hands with MSME ministry under the ESDP initiative (Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme).

- The 'Tech for Tribals' initiative will provide 6-weeks long training to the beneficiaries. The training module is framed by IIT-Kanpur.

- The 'Tech for Tribals' initiative is based on three pillars of Engagement, Capacity Building and Market Linkages. The initiative will focus on making tribal communities educated with IT technology, business and market skills so that they can increase their source of income and become a self-reliant community.

TRADE & COMMERCE

'MSME PRERANA'—BUSINESS MENTORING PROGRAM
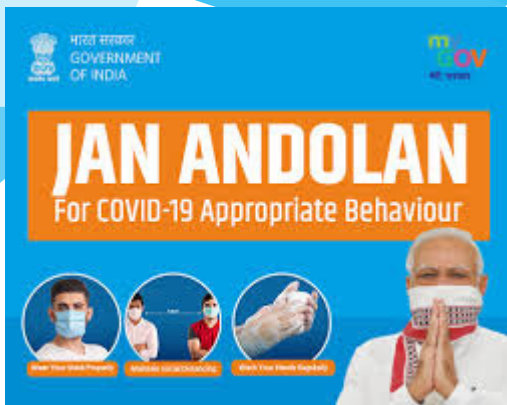

Date: 8th October, 2020

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, launched the program named as 'MSME Prerana'.

Key Points:

- The programme is an online business mentoring programme for MSMEs developed by Indian Bank and Poornatha & Co.

- The programme will help to develop the businesses in the areas like Business skills, Communications, Human Resources, etc.

- The program will offer inputs in simple formats and in local languages for MSMEs. Total 12 sessions will be offered under this programme.

- On completion of these courses, the business firm will be granted with a certificate from Indian Bank, Poornatha & Co. and MADE (Michigan Academy for Developing Entrepreneurs), United States.

- This programme will offer MSME with complete knowledge related to Loan application, management of cash flow, government schemes, etc.

HEALTHCARE

'JAN ANDOLAN CAMPAIGN' FOR COVID-19 APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Date: 9th October, 2020

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Jan Andolan Campaign' for COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviour.

Key Points:

- The campaign aims to have appropriate behaviour of people regarding the safety norms for COVID-19, especially during the upcoming festive seasons and winter season.

- PM Modi has made an appeal to citizens to unite to fight COVID-19. He has asked people to wear a mask, wash hands, maintain hygiene and observe the cleanliness of themselves and in their surroundings. He has also urged people to maintain social distancing norms by following the protocol of 'Do Gaz Ki Doori'.

- The campaign will be conducted through the participation of people in awareness activities like wall paintings, displaying hoardings and installing electronic display boards in premises of government offices.

- To promote of this campaign, PM Modi made a tweet of #Unite2FightCorona.

THALASSEMIA BAL SEWA YOJNA

Date: 15 October, 2020

Union Health Minister launches 2nd phase of "Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojna".

Key Points:

- Launched in 2017, this scheme is a Coal India CSR funded Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT) program.

- It aims to provide a one-time cure opportunity for Haemoglobinopathies like Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Disease for patients who have a matched family donor.

- Thalassemia is a chronic blood disorder. It is a genetic disorder due to which a patient cannot make enough hemoglobin found in Red Blood Cells (RBC's). This leads to anemia and patients also require blood transfusions every two to three weeks to survive.
- India is the thalassaemia capital of the world with 40 million carriers and over 1,00,000 thalassaemia majors under blood transfusion every month.

ECONOMY

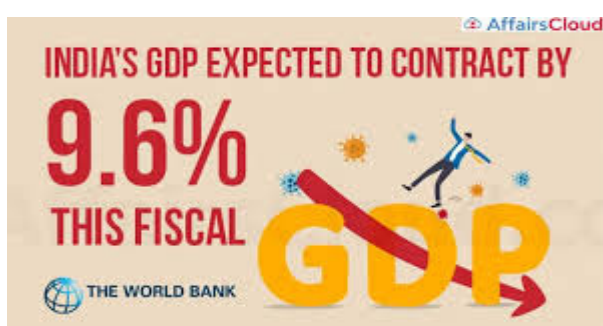## RBI'S 3RD BI-MONTHLY MONETARY POLICY STATEMENT 2020-21

Date: 9th October, 2020

Shaktikanta Das, Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the 3rd Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement for 2020-21.

Key Points:
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) evaluated domestic and global macroeconomic and financial conditions and thus has kept the repo rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) unchanged to 4%.
- The reverse repo rate under LAF is also kept unchanged to 3.35%.
- There is also no change in the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) and Bank Rate which are at 4.25%.
- Another announcement includes that RBI will introduce on-tap Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) for the banks to borrow up to Rs 1 trillion from the window and invest in corporate bonds or debt instruments.
- The committee has predicted real GDP growth for FY 2021 to contract by 9.5%.

INDIA'S GDP TO CONTRACT BY 9.6% IN FY21 - WORLD BANK

Date: 9th October, 2020

The World Bank has predicted that India's GDP will contract by 9.6% in the financial year of 2021.

Key Points:

- This prediction is based on the current nationwide lockdown situation and due to the income shock experienced by households and businesses due to the outbreak of Coronavirus.
- Earlier in June 2020, the World Bank predicted that the Indian economy will shrink by 3.2% in FY21.
- As per the World Bank, India's growth is projected to rebound to 5.4% in 2022.
- Also, regional growth for South Asia is expected to rebound to 4.5% in 2021.
- As per predictions by the World Bank, the fiscal deficit to rise above 12% in FY2021, assuming that the combined deficit of the states is within 4.5% to 5% of GDP.

RBI TO MOVE NGTA TO MANAGE FOREX AND GOLD RESERVES

Date: 13th October, 2020

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced to move to the Next Generation Treasury Application (NGTA) with an aim to manage the country's foreign exchange and gold reserves.

Key Points:

- The application of NGTA will help to improve the functioning of RBI.
- NGTA is basically a web-based application which will provide scalability and flexibility in introducing new products and securities to the central bank.
- It will also support multi-currency transactions and settlements like Fixed Income (FI), Forex, Money Market (MM) and Gold.
- The NGTA web-based application will collect security or contract related details from a trading platform.
- The utilization of the NGTA platform will help to manage forex in a more efficient manner as it will also help to mitigate risk factors and will offer operational efficiency in dealing with asset classes and reports.

- The objectives of NGTA application are: (a) Reserve Management (b) Workflow Management (c) Portfolio Management (d) Integration with third-party and in-house systems, (e) To establish dashboards to provide reports and widgets (f) To deal with FI Securities, MM, Forex and Gold.

INDIA'S GDP TO CONTRACT 10.3% IN FY 2020-21 - IMF

Date: 14th October, 2020

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released the 'World Economic Outlook' report 2020.

Key Points:

- As per the report, the IMF has projected India's GDP to contract 10.3% in FY 2020-21.
- Earlier, IMF projected India's GDP to contract by 4.5% due to the pandemic of COVID-19.
- Also as per the report, India's GDP to grow at 8.8% in FY 2021-22. Earlier prediction for GDP was 6% for FY 2021-22.
- Also as per IMF, the world economy will contract by 4.4% in FY 2020-21.

EDUCATION

'GYAN CIRCLE VENTURES'

Date: 10th October, 2020

Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank inaugurated 'Gyan Circle Ventures' virtually.

Key Points:

- 'Gyan Circle Ventures' is a Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology funded TBI (Technology Business Incubator) of IIIT Sri City, Andhra Pradesh.
- 'Gyan Circle Ventures' will work as a Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE 2.0) incubation centre.
- Aim of this incubation centre is to develop entrepreneurship skills in youths and guide them to become innovators.
- It will motivate youths to use advanced technologies like AI, Block chain, Cyber Physical Systems, Cyber security, IoT, Machine Learning and Robotics.
- 'Gyan Circle Ventures' will be a hub for innovators and for startups. It will offer youth with financial investment support, infra support, mentorship supports, advertisement and promotional support.

WORLD BANK SUPPORTED STARS PROJECT APPROVED

Date: 15th October, 2020

The Union Cabinet has approved implementation of the World Bank aided-Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project.

Key Points:

- The STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education (MoE).
- The project will involve setting up of National assessment Centre, PARAKH which will be an independent and autonomous institution.
- Aim of the project is aligned with the objectives of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of Quality Based Learning Outcomes.
- Focus on initiatives of PM e-Vidya, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission and National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- Initially, the project will be launched in 6 states namely, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha.

DEFENCE

DRDO SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED 'RUDRAM-1'

Date: 10th October, 2020

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test fired 'Rudram-1'.

Key Points:

- 'Rudram-1' is a new generation anti-radiation missile.
- It was test fired at Wheeler Island off the coast of Odisha and was launched from SU-30 Mk1 fighter aircraft.
- Anti-radiation missiles are designed to detect, track and neutralise the adversary's radar, communication assets and other radio frequency sources, which are generally part of their air defence systems.
- Rudram is an air-to-surface missile, designed and developed by the DRDO for Indian Air Force, it is incorporated with INS-GPS navigation system with Passive Homing Head for the final attack.
- It can hit the radiation target with pin-point accuracy.

COASTAL SECURITY EXERCISE – 'SAGAR KAVACH'

Date: 11th October, 2020

Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) conducted the half-yearly Coastal Security Exercise 'Sagar Kavach'.

Key Points:

- The exercise was conducted at coastal areas of Kerala, Karnataka and Lakshadweep.
- The exercise was monitored from Joint Operations Central, Kochi, Kerala and was reviewed by Southern Naval Command Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) Vice Admiral Anil Kumar Chawla.
- The aim of 'Sagar Kavach' exercise is to check the coastal security and improve and update standard operating procedures. This exercise is assumed to be of high significance in the backdrop of the prevailing security mechanism in India.
- 20 Ships of Indian and ICG along with 50 patrol crafts manned by security agencies participated in this exercise. The participants were divided into 2 teams namely Red (attack team) and Blue (defence team).

EXERCISE 'SURAKSHA KAVACH'

Date: 14th October, 2020

Agnibaaz Division (41 Artillery Division) of Indian Army organized an exercise named as Suraksha Kavach in Pune, Maharashtra.

Key Points:

- The Suraksha Kavach Exercise is the joint exercise of Maharashtra Police and Indian Army.
- The aim of this exercise is to harmonise anti-terror responses.
- In this exercise Indian Army and Maharashtra Police cooperated, coordinated and streamlined their drills and procedures.
- The Suraksha Kavach Exercise was conducted to harmonize the procedures of Indian Army and Maharashtra Police in order to activate the QRTs (Quick Reaction Teams) to counter any terrorist actions.

ENVIRONMENT

TREE PLANTATION POLICY BY DELHI GOVERNMENT

Date: 12th October, 2020

The Government of Delhi has passed Tree Plantation Policy with an aim to preserve trees and focus on tree plantation.

Key Points:

- Delhi has become the first state to have a Tree Plantation Policy.
- Under this policy, around 80% of trees which were affected due to construction or development activities will be transplanted in Delhi.
- Also, under this policy, the government will look further in the survival of minimum 80% trees in Delhi.
- To make this policy work in progress, the Delhi Government will form a panel of agencies which will look after tree plantation activities and survival of trees in the state.
- The Tree Plantation Policy is the part of 'Yuddh Pradushan Ke Viruddh' initiative of Delhi Government.

AGRICULTURE

"KAMDHENU DEEPAWALI ABHIYAN"

Date: 13th October, 2020

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog begins a nationwide campaign to celebrate "Kamdhenu Deepawali Abhiyan" – Promoting extensive use of cow-dung/ Panchgavya products this Diwali Festival.

Key Points:

- RKA aims to reach 11 crore families to ignite 33 crore Diyas made of cow-dung during this year's Deepawali festival.

- By providing an environmentally friendly alternative to Chinese made Diyas, the campaign will boost the 'Make in India' vision also.

- Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog constituted in 2019, is a high powered permanent apex advisory body with the mandate to help the Central Government to develop appropriate programmes for conservation, sustainable development and genetic upgradation of indigenous breeds of cows.

- It comes under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

BANKING

SINGLE SBI BRANCH FOR ALL FCRA ACCOUNTS

Date: 14th October, 2020

The Union Home Ministry has asked all NGOs seeking foreign donations to open a designated FCRA account at the State Bank of India's New Delhi branch by March 31, 2021.

Key Points:

- NGOs registered under FCRA shall not receive any foreign donations in any other bank account from April 1, 2021.

- As of now there are 22,434 such NGOs and associations active under the FCRA.

- In September, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2020 was amended by Parliament and a new provision that makes it mandatory for all non-government organisations and associations to receive foreign funds in a designated bank account at SBI's New Delhi branch was inserted.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

APPLIED AI RESEARCH CENTER IN HYDERABAD

Date: 14th October, 2020

Intel India partnered with Government of Telangana, IIIT-Hyderabad and Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) to launch the applied AI (Artificial Intelligence) Research (INAI) Center in Hyderabad.

Key Points:

- Intel announced this collaborative initiative in an inaugural session of 'all.ai 2020 Virtual Summit'.
- 'all.ai 2020 Virtual Summit' was organized by Intel India in collaboration with industries, academic institutions and government to promote AI usage in problem-solving of Indians.
- INAI is an initiative to apply AI to population-scale problems in the Indian context.
- INAI will focus on solving problems and challenges associated with smart mobility segments. The challenges and problems will be solved through strong ecosystem collaboration.
- It will work to attract and motivate talents across the globe in the research area of AI and to make AI usage in overall social development.

IMPACT BASED CYCLONE WARNING SYSTEM

Date: 15th October, 2020

The India Meteorological Departments (IMD) has launched the Impact Based Cyclone Based Warning System.

Key Points:

- The system is launched to reduce economic losses and property damage which is caused due to cyclones that hit Indian coast every year.

- The system was introduced by IMD in a presentation titled 'Chasing the Cyclones' which was organized to mark the World Space Week.
- The system will deliver specific warnings to reduce economic and property damage losses.
- The system will deliver warnings with respect to location-wise or district-wise.
- The system is commissioned from this particular cyclone season i.e. Oct-Dec.

INTERNATIONAL

AGRICULTURE

WORLD COTTON DAY

Date: 8th October, 2020

Second World Cotton Day was observed at the initiative of the Cotton-4 (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali) by the World Trade on 7th October, 2020.

Key Points:

- It was launched in collaboration with the secretariats of the UN, FAO, UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC).
- Objective is to recognize the importance of cotton as a global commodity grown in over 75 countries across 5 continents; to highlight its central role in job creation and maintaining economic stability in several least-developed countries.
- The 1st ever Brand & Logo for Indian Cotton was launched on 2nd World Cotton Day by Ministry of Textiles
- Now India's premium Cotton would be known as 'Kasturi Cotton' in the world cotton Trade.

ENVIRONMENT

STOCKHOLM CONVENTION ON POPS

Date: 9th October, 2020

Union Cabinet has approved the Ratification of seven chemicals listed under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

Key Points:

- The Cabinet has also delegated its powers to ratify chemicals under the Stockholm Convention to the Union Ministers of External Affairs (MEA) and Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in respect of POPs already regulated under the domestic regulations.

- These are:
  - ❖ Chlordecone
  - ❖ Hexabromobiphenyl
  - ❖ Hexabromodiphenyl ether and Heptabromodiphenyl ether
  - ❖ Tetrabromodiphenyl ether and Pentabromodiphenyl ether
  - ❖ Pentachlorobenzene
  - ❖ Hexabromocyclododecane
  - ❖ Hexachlorobutadiene

- The ratification process would enable India to access Global Environment Facility (GEF) financial resources in updating the National Implementation Plan (NIP).

- Stockholm Convention on POPs signed in 2001 aims to eliminate or restrict the production and use of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

INDIA'S 8 BEACHES GET INTERNATIONAL BLUE FLAG CERTIFICATION

Date: 13th October, 2020

Denmark based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) has awarded the recognition of 'Blue Flag' to 8 Indian Beaches.

Key Points:

- The name of 8 beaches recognized with 'Blue Flag' are: Shivrajpur (Gujarat), Kasarkod (Karnataka), Pudubidri (Karnataka), Golden Beach (Odisha), Radhanagar (Andaman and Nicobar island), Ghoghla (Diu), Kappad (Kerala) and Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh).

- India has become the first country to be recognized with the Coveted International Blue Flag certificate for 8 beaches in the single attempt itself.

- The selection of the beaches for Blue Flag certificate was made by an international jury consisting from UNEP (United Nations Economic Programmes), UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisations), FEE & IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

- GOI has set a target to bring a total of 100 Indian Beaches under the certificate of 'Blue Flag' in the next five years.

- Criteria for receiving Blue Flag certificate for Beaches are: Water Quality, Environmental Education and Information, Environment Management and Safety and Services.

REPORTS & INDICES

'POVERTY AND SHARED PROSPERITY 2020: REVERSAL OF FORTUNE'

Date: 10th October, 2020

World Bank Group has released a Biennial report titled 'Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversal of Fortune.

Key Points:

- As per the report, around 150 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty by the end of 2021 because of COVID-19 pandemic.

- Around 88 million to 115 million will be pushed to extreme poverty due to this COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

- This report states that this time it is the first to rise in extreme poverty percentage in the past 20 years.
- The aspects which lead to an increase in global poverty are: COVID-19, Armed Conflicts and Climate Change.
- Around 82% of people from middle-income countries will be dragged into extreme poverty.

3RD EDITION OF CRI INDEX 2020

Date: 13th October, 2020

The Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index 2020 is released by Oxfam International and Development Finance International.

Key Points:

- India has been ranked at 129th position among 158 countries. The CRI ranking index is topped by Norway. The second and third position is marked by Denmark and Germany respectively. South Sudan has the lowest ranking at 158th position in CRI Index 2020.
- The third edition of the CRI index focuses on fighting inequality during the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The index measures what governments are doing to reduce the gap between rich and poor.
- The report analyses measures adopted by the nation and its government's policies or actions in major three areas which are related to tackle and reduce inequality.
- The three major areas of analysis are: Social Spending, Progressive Taxation Policies and Labour Rights.

AWARDS & HONOURS

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR 2020

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER

Date: 10th October,

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 will be given to the World Food Programme (WFP) for its efforts to combat hunger.

Key Points:

- In 2019, the WFP provided assistance to close to 100 million people in 88 countries who are victims of acute food insecurity and hunger.

- The WFP was established in 1961. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation committed towards its global goal of ending hunger by the year 2030.

- WFP was awarded the prize for its efforts to combat hunger and for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas.

- WFP runs a logistics service that has dispatched medical cargoes to over 120 countries throughout the pandemic to help governments and health partners fighting COVID-19.

- It also has provided passenger services to ferry humanitarian and health workers where commercial flights were unavailable.

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OBITUARY

RAM VILAS PASWAN

Date: 8th October, 2020

The Union Consumer Affairs Minister Shri Ram Vilas Paswan passed away at the age of 74.

Key Points:

- Paswan was one of the most noted Dalit leaders of India.
- He founded the Lok Janshakti Party in 2004.
- He has been elected to Lok Sabha eight times.
- Paswan has served as Union Minister under five prime ministers of all national coalitions viz. National Democratic Alliance, United Progressive Alliance and The United Front.
- The One Nation One Ration Card Scheme was being implemented under his leadership.

APPOINTMENTS

DINESH KUMAR KHARA

Date: 8th October, 2020

Why in news: Assumed charge as the new Chairman of State Bank of India.

Key Points:

- Dinesh Kumar Khara has assumed charge as the new Chairman of the country's largest lender State Bank of India. He took over from Rajnish Kumar.

- Khara has been appointed as SBI Chairman for a period of three years.
- On August 28, Bank Board Bureau had recommended the appointment of Dinesh Kumar Khara to the post of chairman of SBI.
- He was instrumental in merging five associate banks and Bharatiya Mahila Bank with SBI effective April 2017.

AWARDS & HONOURS

CHAITANYA VENKATESWARAN

Date: 12th October, 2020
Why in news: Held the post of the British High Commissioner in India for a day.
Key Points:
- Chaitanya Venkateswaran, an 18-year-old woman from Delhi held the post of the British High Commissioner in India for a day.
- The British High Commission has been organising the 'High Commissioner for a Day' competition annually since 2017, inviting young Indian women aged 18 to 23 years to take over as their most senior diplomat.
- The initiative is aimed at empowering and highlighting the challenges faced by women across the world.
- Chaitanya is the fourth young woman to take over as the British High Commissioner in an annual competition run by the UK mission in celebration of International Day of the Girl Child on October, 11.

INTERNATIONAL

AWARDS & HONOURS

EMMANUELLE CHARPENTIER & JENNIFER A DOUDNA

Date: 8th October, 2020

Why in news: Awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Key Points:

- Emmanuelle Charpentier of France and Jennifer A Doudna of the USA have been awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for developing CRISPR/Cas9 genetic scissors, one of gene technology's sharpest tools.
- It is for the first time a Nobel science prize has gone to a women-only team.
- The CRISPR/Cas9 genetic scissors can be used to change the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) of animals, plants and microorganisms with extremely high precision.
- The CRISPR/Cas9 tool has already contributed to significant gains in crop resilience, altering their genetic code to better withstand drought and pests.
- This technology has had a revolutionary impact on the life sciences and contributes to new cancer therapies. It has the potential of curing inherited diseases.

LOUISE GLÜCK

Date: 9th October, 2020

Why in news: Won the 2020 Nobel Prize in literature.

Key Points:

- The 2020 Nobel Prize for Literature has been awarded to American poet Louise Glück.
- A professor at Yale University, Glück made her debut in 1968 with her collection titled 'Firstborn'.
- She is seen as one of the most prominent poets and essayists in American contemporary literature.
- She won the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 for her collection The Wild Iris and the National Book Award for her latest collection, Faithful and Virtuous Night, in 2014.
- She is the fourth woman to win the Nobel Literature Prize in the past decade.
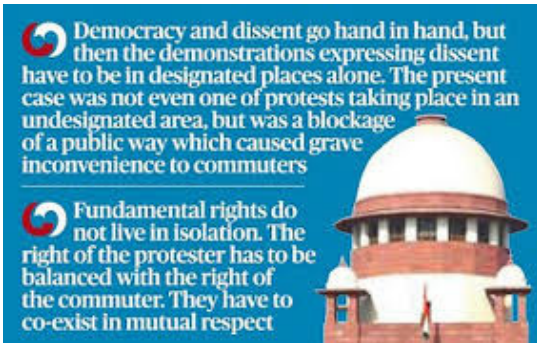
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LAW & JUSTICE

SC JUDGEMENT REGARDING RIGHT TO PROTEST

Date: 8th October, 2020

Key Highlights:

- The Supreme Court has recently highlighted that occupying public places for protests is not acceptable and such a space cannot be occupied indefinitely.
- The verdict came after a plea was filed against the Anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests which had led to blocking of a road in Shaheen Bagh in Delhi last December.
- The judgment upheld the right to peaceful protest against a law. It also made clear that public ways and public spaces cannot be occupied, especially indefinitely.
- The rights to free speech and peaceful protest were "treasures" but also subject to reasonable restrictions imposed in the interests of sovereignty, integrity and public order.
- The right of the protester has to be balanced with the right of the commuter. They have to co-exist in mutual respect.

ENVIRONMENT

GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN

Date: 9th October, 2020

Key Highlights:

- The Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA) has directed Delhi and neighbouring States to implement air pollution control measures under very poor and severe category air quality of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) from 15th October, 2020.

- GRAP was formulated in 2016 and notified in 2017 for Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR).

- These are institutionalized measures to be taken when air quality deteriorates, hence works only as an emergency measure.

- GRAP includes the measures which will be taken by different government agencies to prevent worsening of Air Quality of Delhi-NCR and prevent PM10 and PM2.5 levels to go beyond the 'moderate' national Air Quality Index (AQI) category.

- If air quality reaches the severe+ stage, GRAP talks about shutting down schools and implementing the odd-even road-space rationing scheme.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NEW H-1B CURBS

Date: 10th October, 2020

Key Highlights:

- The United States has issued new rules that make it harder for US companies to employ people on H-1B non-immigrant visas.

- The Interim Final Rules change: The definitions of specialty occupation, employer and employee-employer relationship. Limit visa validity to one year for a worker at a third-party work site. Increases enforcement and investigations for these visas.

- The new rules will impact Indian services and staffing firms who often place workers on projects at third-party locations.
- Indian nationals have received over 70% of the H-1B visas issued over the last few years, even as the share of Indian tech companies in the top 10 visa recipients has been dropping steadily in favour of American tech companies such as Apple, Google and Amazon.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDO-SRI LANKAN ACCORD

Date: 10th October, 2020

Key Highlights:

- Following Indian Prime Minister's request to the Sri Lankan counterpart to address Tamil aspirations with the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, the Tamil MPs of Sri Lanka have questioned the government's commitment to the preceding Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987.
- Popularly referred to as the Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord, after its architects Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene.
- It sought to collectively address all the three contentious issues between India and Sri Lanka: strategic interests, people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and Tamil minority rights in Sri Lanka.
- This accord saw the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka.
- The accord was expected to resolve the Sri Lankan Civil War by enabling the thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Provincial Councils Act of 1987.

POLITY

THAILAND ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS

Date: 15th October, 2020

Key Highlights:

- Anti-government protests have escalated in Thailand in the last three months.
- It all started in 2017 when King's constitutional powers were increased.
- Pro-democracy activists say Thailand is backtracking on the constitutional monarchy established when absolute royal rule ended in 1932. They say the monarchy is too close to the army and argue that this has undermined democracy.
- Protesters are demanding that the monarchy be reformed and Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha should resign.
- Protesters also seek the scrapping of lese majeste laws against insulting the king.
- They want the king to relinquish the personal control he took over a palace fortune estimated in the tens of billions of dollars, and some units of the army.

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

'PARAM Siddhi-AI'—India's fastest HPC-AI Supercomputer

Date: 8th October, 2020

Key Features:

- The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing has announced that it will be commissioning India's largest HPC-AI Supercomputer named as 'PARAM Siddhi –AI'.
- The aim behind this development is to place India among top countries in the world in the sector of AI supercomputing research and innovation.
- This initiative was headed by Abhishek Das, Scientist and Program Director (HPC-AI Infrastructure Development) at C-DAC.
- The 'PARAM Siddhi –AI' supercomputer is a machine with 210 AI Petaflops (6.5 Petaflops Peak DP).
- It will be established under NSM C-DAC, NITI Aayog, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Dept. of Science and Technology and Central Government.

HEALTHCARE

'FELUDA' TEST FOR COVID-19

Date: 11th October, 2020

Key Features:

- Feluda is the acronym for FNCAS9 Editor Linked Uniform Detection Assay.
- It is an accurate and low-cost paper-based test strip to detect Covid-19 and can deliver a result in 45 minutes.
- It has been approved for commercial launch by the Drugs Controller General of India.
- Developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Tata Group.
- It uses indigenously developed CRISPR gene-editing technology to identify and target the genetic material of SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

ELECTRONIC VACCINE INTELLIGENCE NETWORK (EVIN)

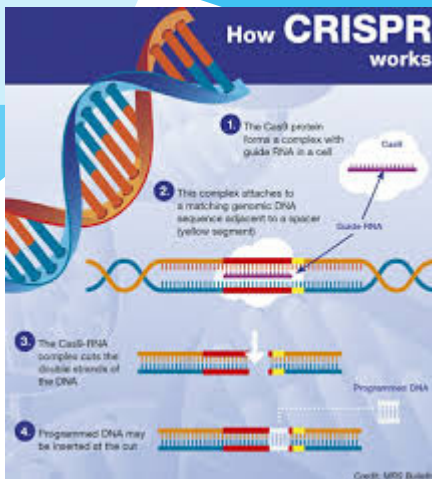**Date:** 14th October, 2020

Key Features:

- The eVIN network is being repurposed for the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The eVIN is an innovative technological solution aimed at strengthening immunization supply chain systems across the country.
- This is being implemented under the National Health Mission (NHM) by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It aims to provide real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in the country.
- It has helped create a big data architecture that generates actionable analytics encouraging data-driven decision-making and consumption-based planning.

INTERNATIONAL
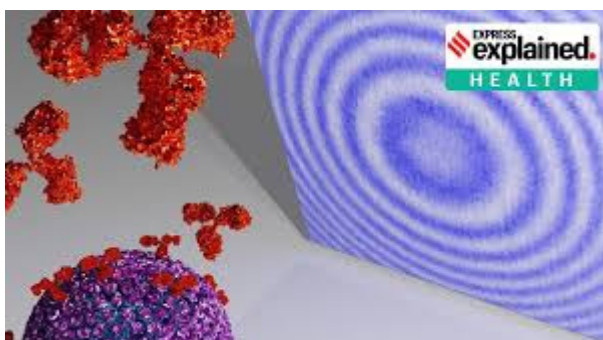
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

CRISPR TECHNOLOGY

Date: 8th October, 2020

Key Features:

- Recently, Emmanuelle Charpentier of France and Jennifer A Doudna of the USA have been awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for developing CRISPR/ Cas9 genetic scissors, one of gene technology's sharpest tools.

- The CRISPR (short for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) technology for gene-editing was first developed in 2012.

- It makes gene sequencing very easy, simple and extremely efficient providing nearly endless possibilities.

- The technology replicates a natural defence mechanism in Streptococcus pyogenes that use a similar method to protect itself from virus attacks.

- A DNA strand, when broken, has a natural tendency to repair itself but the auto-repair mechanism can lead to the re-growth of a problematic sequence.

- Scientists intervene during this auto-repair process by supplying the desired sequence of genetic codes, which replaces the original sequence.

HEALTHCARE

HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGING BASED METHOD

Date: 15th October, 2020

Key Features:

- Scientists from New York University have developed a method using holographic imaging to detect both viruses and antibodies.
- Holography is a process that creates three-dimensional images called holograms using laser beams, the properties of interference and diffraction, light intensity recording, and illumination of the recording.
- The method can test either for the virus (current infection) or antibodies (immunity).
- The breakthrough has the potential to aid in medical diagnoses, and specifically, those related to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- If fully realised, this proposed test could be done in under 30 minutes, is highly accurate, and can be performed by minimally trained personnel.

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