

# Week 1 Current Affairs Update

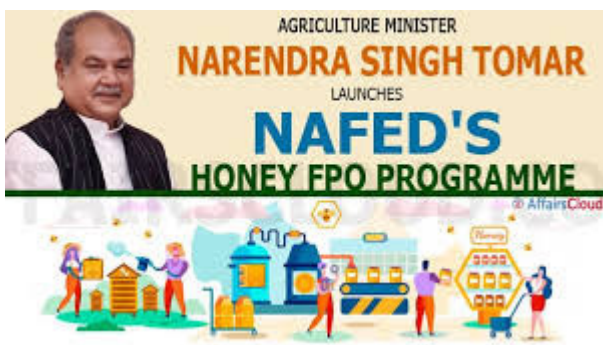
1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## EVENTS

### NATIONAL

#### AGRICULTURE

#### HONEY FPO PROGRAMME INAUGURATED UNDER NAFED



**Date:** 1st December 2020

Recently, the Honey Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) Programme of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) was virtually inaugurated.

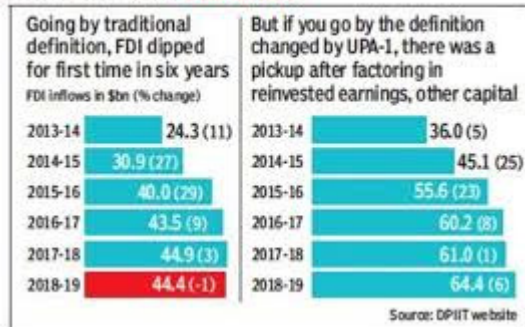
#### Key Points:

- It is a new Central Sector Scheme for the promotion of 10,000 new FPOs.
- Under it, the National Level Project Management Advisory and Fund Sanctioning Committee (N-PMAFSC) had allocated FPO clusters for 2020-21 to all implementing agencies.
- FPOs will be developed by specialist Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) engaged by implementing agencies.
- NAFED has initiated the formation and promotion of FPOs of beekeepers and honey collectors in 5 states of India.
- 5 locations: East Champaran (Bihar), Morena (Madhya Pradesh), Bharatpur (Rajasthan), Mathura (Uttar Pradesh) and Sunderbans (West Bengal).
- The first Honey FPO has been registered in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

## ECONOMY

### SINGAPORE AND USA- BIGGEST FDI SOURCES FOR INDIA

#### FDI: UP OR DOWN?



**Date:** 1st December 2020

- The DPIIT's (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) data for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has mentioned the names of top investing nations in India during April-September 2020.
- **Key Points:**
- As per the data, Singapore has become the top source of FDI by investing Rs 62,084 crores (USD 8.30 billion).
- The second source of FDI is marked by the USA which has invested Rs 53,266 crores (USD 7.12 billion) in India.
- The USA has overtaken Mauritius which held the 2nd rank during the first half of the current fiscal year.
- And the third position is marked by Cayman Island which has invested Rs 15,672 crore in India.
- Mauritius is in the fourth position as it has invested Rs 15,019 crore in India.
- As per the data from DPIIT, Computer software and hardware sector has in total received an investment of Rs 131,169 crore and this sector has become major FDI equity inflows based sector.

## DEFENCE

### C32-LH2 TANK: BIGGEST CRYOGENIC PROPELLANT TANK DELIVERED TO ISRO



**Date:** 2nd December 2020

The public sector aerospace manufacturing company, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) delivered the biggest cryogenic propellant tank C32-LH2 to the Indian Space Research Organisation.

**Key Points:**

- The C32-LH2 tank is a developmental cryogenic propellant tank of aluminium alloy. The tank can load 5755 kg propellant fuel.
- It is designed for improving the payload capability of GSLV MK-III launching vehicle of ISRO.
- Cryogenic fuels are fuels that require storage at extremely low temperatures in order to maintain them in a liquid state.
- These fuels are used in machinery that operates in space because ordinary fuel cannot be used there due to the very low temperatures often encountered in space, and due to absence of an environment that supports combustion.
- Cryogenic fuels most often constitute liquefied gases such as liquid hydrogen.

**ANTI-SHIP VERSION OF BRAHMOS**



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

The Indian Navy successfully test-fired the anti-ship version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile.

**Key Points:**

- It was test-fired from INS Ranvijay in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory.
- Its strike range observed was 300 km and it successfully hit the target ship near Car Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal.

- The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile is developed by BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd. It is the joint venture of India and Russia.
- The anti-ship version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile has a maximum speed of 3450 kmph.
- Also recently, the land version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was test-fired from Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory.

## **GOVERNMENT APPROVES DEPUTY CHIEF OF STRATEGY POST**



**Date:** 5th December 2020

A major restructure at the Army Headquarters has finally been approved by the government.

### **Key Points:**

- The government has given its nod to create the position of a third Deputy Chief of Army.
- He will act as a “single-point advice” person to the Vice Chief of Army on operational issues.
- He will head operations, intelligence, perspective and information warfare.
- The Directorate General of Military Operations and the Directorate General of Military Intelligence, both headed by Lieutenant General-rank officers, will be under him.
- Current DGMO Lt Gen Paramjit Singh is likely to be appointed the first Deputy Chief (Strategy).

## **HEALTHCARE**

### **WORLD AIDS DAY 2020**



**Date:** 1st December 2020

The World AIDS Day is observed on 1st December every year all over the world.

**Key Points:**

- It was founded in 1988 by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Theme for 2020: “Global solidarity, resilient HIV services.”
- In 2019, 6,90,000 people died from HIV-related causes and 1.7 million people were newly infected, with nearly 62% of these new infections occurring among key populations and their partners.
- AIDS is a pandemic disease caused by the infection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which damages the human immune system. It is a chronic, potentially life-threatening condition.
- No cure exists for AIDS. Strict adherence to antiretroviral regimens (ARVs) can slow the disease’s progress and prevent secondary infections and complications.

**THIRD STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR MISSION COVID SURAKSHA**



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

The Union Government recently announced the third stimulus package of Rs. 900 Crore for the Mission COVID Suraksha – The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission.

**Key Points:**

- This grant will be provided to the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) for Research & Development of Indian COVID-19 vaccines.

- The COVID-19 Vaccine development Mission with end-to-end focus from preclinical development through clinical development and manufacturing and regulatory facilitation for deployment would consolidate all available and funded resources towards accelerated product development.
- The mission is led by the Department of Biotechnology.
- The existing activities under National Bio Pharma Mission (NBM) and Ind-CEPI Mission will provide complementary strengths to this Mission.

## **THE 2ND CANCER GENOME ATLAS (TCGA)**



**Date:** 5th December 2020

The Ministry of Science & Technology has inaugurated the 2nd Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) 2020 Conference.

### **Key Points:**

- TCGA is a landmark project started in 2005 by the US-based National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI).
- The idea was to make a catalogue of the genetic mutations that cause cancer.
- Tumour samples and blood samples were collected from patients. They were processed using gene sequencing and bioinformatics.
- The TCGA has generated over 2.5 petabytes of data for over 11,000 patients.
- The data has been used to develop new approaches to diagnose, treat and prevent cancer.
- Indian Cancer Genome Atlas (ICGA) has also been initiated in India by a consortium of key stakeholders led by CSIR in which several government agencies, cancer hospitals, academic institutions and private sector partners.

## **ART & CULTURE**

### **VIRTUAL AADI MAHOTSAV**



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

The Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda launched the first-ever virtual edition Aadi Mahotsav.

### **Key Points:**

- The festival is virtually hosted on the website of tribes India ([www.tribesindia.com](http://www.tribesindia.com)).
- It was launched virtually in Madhya Pradesh.
- It is jointly organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
- The Aadi Mahotsav is basically a National Tribal Festival which aims to promote the tribal communities, their products and culture which will help to increase their source of income.
- This festival will showcase the tribal crafts and their products to Urban India which will help to boost their sale and will thus increase the income of tribes.
- This year's festival will be conducted in three phases of states like Madhya Pradesh (1st to 10th Dec 2020), Gujarat (11th to 20th Dec 2020) and West Bengal (21st to 30th Dec 2020).

## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

### **ARTPARK SET UP IN BENGALURU**



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

An AI & Robotics Technologies Park (ARTPARK) was recently set up in Bengaluru. It will promote technology innovations in AI (Artificial Intelligence) & Robotics leading to societal impact by executing ambitious mission mode R&D projects.

**Key Points:**

- ARTPARK, is a unique not-for-profit foundation established by Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru with support from AI Foundry in a public-private model.
- It received seed funding of Rs. 170 Cr (\$22mn) from Department of Science & Technology(DST), Govt. of India, under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).
- It will bring about a collaborative consortium of partners from industry, academia and government bodies.
- ARTPARK will develop DataSetu – that will enable confidentiality and privacy-preserving framework to share data and run analytics spurring the data-sharing ecosystem and create a data marketplace, boosting AI applications and solutions.

**PIXXEL TO LAUNCH REMOTE SENSING SATELLITE**



**Date:** 7th December 2020

The Bengaluru based private satellite-imaging company, Pixxel has decided to launch its first remote-sensing satellite.

**Key Points:**

- The satellite will be launched on the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) workhorse rocket Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) in early 2021.
- For this purpose, it has signed a pact with New Space India Limited (NSIL).
- Both NSIL and Pixxel will work to enhance utilisation and maximise the benefits of space assets for India.
- This remote sensing satellite by Pixxel is said to address and offer solutions to many pressing environmental and agricultural issues.



## ECONOMY

### MUNI BONDS



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

Bonds issued by the Lucknow Municipal Corporation (LMC) were listed on the BSE, raising Rs 200 crore for Uttar Pradesh's capital.

#### Key Points:

- Lucknow has become the ninth city in the country to raise capital through municipal bonds.
- Until now, a cumulative amount of Rs 3,600 crore has been raised via muni bonds in the country.
- The money raised using such bonds is typically used for infra projects such as roads, water and housing.
- In 2015, market regulator SEBI had issued the framework for raising capital by way of muni bonds.
- According to the UP Chief Minister, Ghaziabad will be the next to issue a municipal issue and it will be followed by Prayagraj, Varanasi, Agra and Kanpur.

## BANKING & FINANCE

### RBI'S MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE MEET



**Date:** 4th December 2020

The Reserve Bank of India's MPC meeting was held. It was headed by RBI Governor, Shaktikanta Das.

## Key Points:

- RBI has decided to keep interest rates unchanged for the third time in a row and has maintained the policy stance at ‘accommodative’.
- As per the decisions from MPC Committee members, the repo rate or the rate at which RBI lends to the banks is unchanged to 4%.
- The reverse repo rate under the LAF is also unchanged at 3.35%.
- The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and Bank Rate is also kept unchanged at 4.25%.
- These decisions to maintain the status quo on policy rates are taken because of inflation.
- Also, the Governor stated that GDP growth for the fiscal year 2021 is at -7.5%.

## REPORTS & INDICES

### IIT-BOMBAY URBAN QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX

IIT-B RANKING OF INDIAN CITIES		
Index	Highest ranked	Lowest ranked
Basic amenities	Pune	Patna
Economic development	Mumbai	Patna
Safety and security	Kolkata	Patna
Transportation access	Delhi	Indore
Environmental impact	Mumbai	Lucknow
Infrastructure development	Kolkata	Patna
Gender role	Chennai	Patna

**Date:** 6th December 2020

IIT-Bombay researchers have come up with an urban quality of life index tailored to the reality of life in India.

## Key Points:

- Overall, Mumbai tops the list of 14, followed closely by Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai.
- For the first time, they have factored in gender parity. Chennai, it turns out, is the most women-friendly and Patna the least.
- The study found that Jaipur has the highest crime rate against women, Chennai has the lowest .
- The gap in literacy rate between men and women is the widest in Jaipur (13.2%) and lowest in Kolkata (5.4%). Literacy was the highest in Pune (91%) and, surprisingly, the lowest in Hyderabad (83%).
- The unemployment rate for women is the highest in Patna — at 346, it is more than four times the urban average of 73.

## ENVIRONMENT

## US AIR QUALITY INDEX



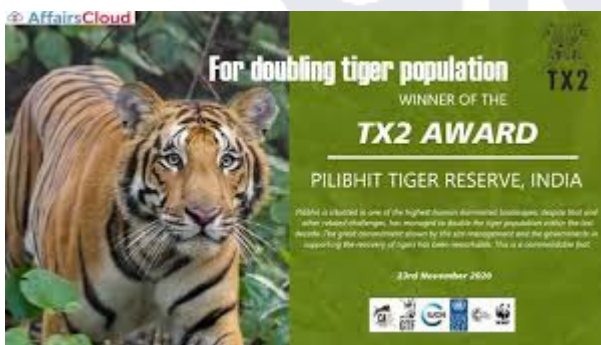
Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern
0 to 50	Good
51-100	Moderate
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
151-200	Unhealthy
201-300	Very Unhealthy
301 to 500	Hazardous

**Date:** 1st December 2020

As per the latest report of US Air Quality Index, Lahore is marked at most polluted cities in the world.

**Key Points:**

- As per the report, the particulate matter (PM) rating of Lahore was 423.
- The second position is marked by New Delhi with the PM of 229.
- The third position is marked by Kathmandu with the PM of 178.
- As per the United States Environmental Protection Agency, if the value of AQI (Air Quality Index) is under 50, then the air quality is determined to be satisfactory.

**CONSERVATION EXCELLENCE AWARD, 2020**

**Date:** 1st December 2020

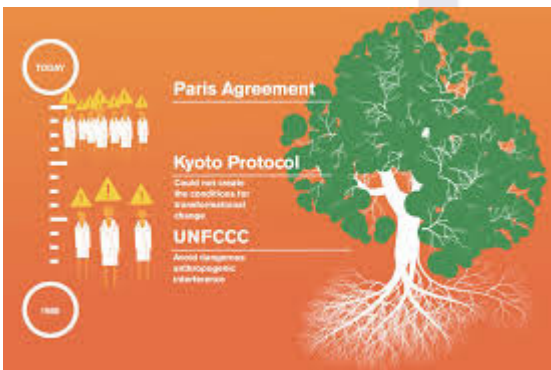
Recently, The Transboundary Manas Conservation Area received the Conservation Excellence Award, 2020.

**Key Points:**

- Conservation Excellence Award recognises one site that has achieved excellence in two or more of these five themes:

- (1) Tiger and prey population monitoring and research;
  - (2) Effective site management;
  - (3) Enhanced law enforcement & protection & ranger welfare improvement;
  - (4) Community based conservation, benefits and human-wildlife conflict mitigation;
  - (5) Habitat and prey management.
- Transboundary Manas Conservation Area (TraMCA) was established in 2011 with a vision to jointly develop and manage a transboundary conservation area between Bhutan and India, for the benefit of people and wildlife.
  - The TraMCA landscape forms a vital mosaic of conservation spaces across the Eastern Himalayas.
  - It covers the entire Manas Tiger Reserve in India, four protected areas in Bhutan and also two biological corridors.

## **APEX COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT (AIPA)**



**Date:** 1st December 2020

The Government of India has constituted the Apex Committee for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (AIPA).

### **Key Points:**

- The AIPA is constituted to enhance coordinated response for climate change matters in order to keep India on the proper track to meet its climate change obligations under the Paris Agreement, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- This committee will be acting as a national authority for regulating carbon markets in India under Article 6.2, Article 6.4 and Article 6.8 of the Paris Agreement.
- The committee will be chaired by Secretary of Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

- The committee will be responsible to regularly update and report the NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

## **SUMMITS & CONFERENCES**

### **19TH SCO COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT SUMMIT**



**Date:** 2nd December 2020

The 19th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of Government summit was chaired by Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu.

#### **Key Points:**

- The summit was participated by Prime Ministers of SCO member states and Ministers and representatives of Observer states and a special guest from Turkmenistan via video conference.
- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu mentioned how India is working to keep its COVID-19 death rate at one of the lowest levels in the world.
- He also mentioned that India is having the highest recovery rate of over 93% due to a people-empowered and people-driven approach.
- He highlighted India's work for the manufacturing of the vaccines for global immunization programs and also mentioned that over 30 indigenous COVID-19 vaccines are being developed in India.
- The Vice President highlighted Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission and the work is done under it by the government.
- He mentioned about cross-border terrorism and urged to maintain peace for the overall progress of all nations.

### **7TH IEF-IGU MINISTERIAL GAS FORUM**



**Date:** 6th December 2020

The 7th edition of IEF-IGU (International Energy Forum- International Gas Union) Ministerial Gas Forum was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**Key Points:**

- The forum was hosted by Malaysia.
- India was represented by Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan.
- Theme for the Forum: ‘Towards Recovery and Shared Prosperity: Natural Gas Opportunities for a Sustainable World’.
- It was held virtually and the forum observed the identification of energy policies along with business strategies in the sector of gas markets.
- The dignitaries discussed exploring new natural gas market prospects which will lead to achieving a sustainable future.

**REPORTS & INDICES**

**QS ASIA UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2021**



**Date:** 2nd December 2020

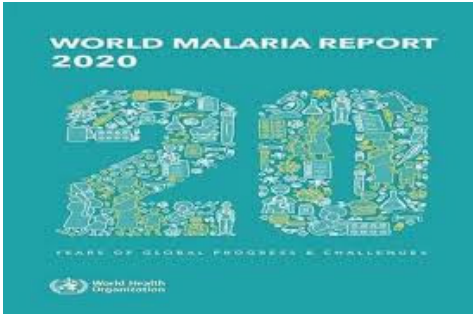
Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), which is the global higher education think-tank, has released QS Asia University Rankings 2021.

**Key Points:**

- It is released in partnership with King Abdulaziz University (KAU), Saudi Arabia.
- The ranking list is topped by National University of Singapore (NUS) for the third consecutive year.

- From India, 3 IITs have made positions in the top 50. The IITs are namely, IIT Bombay (37th Rank), IIT-Delhi (47th Rank) and IIT-Madras (50th Rank).
- The second rank is marked by Tsinghua University (China) and the third rank is marked by Nanyang Technological University (Singapore).

## WORLD MALARIA REPORT, 2020



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

The World Malaria Report (WMR), 2020 was recently released by WHO. It indicates that India has made considerable progress in reducing its malaria burden.

### Key Points:

- India is the only high endemic country which has reported a decline of 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018.
- The Annual Parasitic Incidence (API) reduced by 27.6% in 2018 compared to 2017 and by 18.4% in 2019 as compared to 2018.
- India has sustained API less than one since year 2012.
- India has also contributed to the largest drop in cases region-wide, from approximately 20 million to about 6 million.
- The percentage drop in the malaria cases was 71.8% and deaths was 73.9% between 2000 to 2019.

## 8TH GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2020



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), India has released the '8th Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism'.

## Key Points:

- As per the index, India is ranked at 8th position with Most Affected Country in the world due to terrorism in 2019. The score of India is 7.353.
- Afghanistan is the first most affected country in the world due to terrorism in 2019 with a score of 9.592.
- The second and third rank is marked by Iraq (Score: 8.682) and Nigeria (Score: 8.314) respectively.
- The least affected countries due to terrorism are: Qatar (133rd Rank with score 0.014) and Uzbekistan (134th Rank with score 0.010). At 135th rank, there are 29 countries with a score of 0.

## ART & CULTURE

### SCO ONLINE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

Recently, the Vice President of India has launched the first ever SCO Online Exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage.

## Key Points:

- The Exhibition is being organised by the National Museum, New Delhi, in active collaboration with SCO member countries.
- Participants: Museums from India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- The launch happened during the 19th Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Heads of Government (SCO CHG), held in New Delhi.
- Buddhist philosophy and art of Central Asia connects SCO countries to each other and presents an excellent opportunity for visitors to access, appreciate and compare Buddhist art antiquities from SCO countries on a single platform.
- The visitors can explore the Indian Buddhist treasures from the Gandhara and Mathura Schools, Nalanda, Amaravati, Sarnath, etc. in a 3D virtual format.



## HEALTHCARE

### UN DECIDES CANNABIS NOT A DANGEROUS NARCOTIC



**Date:** 4th December 2020

The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) recently reclassified out of the most dangerous category of drugs.

#### **Key Points:**

- The CND has decided to remove cannabis from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.
- Earlier, cannabis was listed alongside deadly, addictive opioids, including heroin.
- Now, it is removed from the strictest control schedules that even discouraged its use for medical purposes.
- The removal has opened the door to recognizing the medicinal and therapeutic potential of the commonly-used but still largely illegal recreational drug.
- The decision could also drive additional scientific research into the plant's long-heralded medicinal properties and act as a catalyst for countries to legalize the drug for medicinal use, and reconsider laws on its recreational use.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### CHINA GIVES 'GO AHEAD' FOR NEW DAM ON BRAHMAPUTRA



**Date:** 5th December 2020

Recently, China has given the go ahead for a Chinese hydropower company to construct the first downstream hydropower project on the lower reaches of the river Brahmaputra.

### **Key Points:**

- The state-owned hydropower company POWERCHINA signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government to implement hydropower exploitation in the downstream of the Yarlung Zangbo river as part of the new Five Year Plan (2021-2025).
- This will be the first time the downstream sections of the river will be tapped. However, the location of the planned project has not been mentioned anywhere.
- The Great Bend of the Brahmaputra and the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon in Medog county, where the river turns sharply to flow across the border into f Arunachal Pradesh could be the potential spot for the project.
- This 50 km section alone offers a potential of developing 70 million kilowatt hours (Kwh).
- Brahmaputra originates under the name of Siang or Dihang, from the Chemayungdung glacier of the Kailash range near the Mansarovar lake. It enters India west of Sadiya town in Arunachal Pradesh.

### **7TH MEET OF INDIA- MONGOLIA JOINT COMMITTEE**



**Date:** 7th December 2020

The 7th meeting of India-Mongolia of Joint Committee on Cooperation was held virtually.

### **Key Points:**

- India was represented by Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar and Mongolia was represented by L Oyun-Erdene, Chief Cabinet Secretary of the nation.
- Both the dignitaries expressed their satisfaction for the arrangement of special flights between the two nations.
- They assured to work collaboratively to tackle COVID-19, which included procurement of vaccines by Mongolia from India.

- Also, both nations assured to work in cooperation for clean energy and India also welcomed the decision by Mongolia to join the International Solar Alliance.

## SPACE

### ARECIBO TELESCOPE



**Date:** 5th December 2020

Puerto Rico's massive Arecibo telescope, famous for its stellar contributions to astronomy recently collapsed.

#### **Key Points:**

- Arecibo was first built in 1963. It is owned by The US National Science Foundation.
- It is the second-largest single-dish radio telescope in the world.
- It was employed to observe planets, asteroids and the ionosphere.
- It had found prebiotic molecules in distant galaxies, the first exoplanets, and the first millisecond pulsar.
- In 1967, Arecibo was able to discover that the planet Mercury rotates in 59 days and not 88 days as had been originally thought.
- In 1993, scientists Russell Hulse and Joseph Taylor were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for their work on the observatory.

### INDIA AND USA SIGNS MOU IN IP COOPERATION



**Date:** 5th December 2020

India and the United States of America have entered into MoU to enhance cooperation in Intellectual Property (IP).

## Key Points:

- Under this MoU, both the nations will be drafting a work plan to deepen IP Cooperation.
- Both the nations will collaborate to conduct training and information exchange in order to have best practices in IP protection.
- This MoU is a one-step forward for India towards becoming a major player in global innovation and will also lead to achieving the objectives of National IPR Policy, 2016.
- The MoU was signed by Guruprasad Mohapatra, Secretary of Commerce Ministry and Andrei Iancu, Under Secretary, US Patent and Trademark Office.

## DEFENCE

### PASSEX EXERCISE 2020



**Date:** 5th December 2020

The PASSEX (Passage) Exercise 2020 was held between the Indian Navy and Russian Federation Navy.

## Key Points:

- The PASSEX exercise was held in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region.
- Aim of this exercise was to increase interoperability, improve understanding and imbibe best practices in both nations.
- In this exercise, both the navies practised weapon firing, advanced surface warfare exercise and advanced anti-submarine exercise, helicopter operations, seamanship exercises.
- Indian Navy was represented by: Anti-submarine corvette Kadmat, indigenously built guided missile frigate Shivalik and integral helicopters.
- Russian Navy was represented by: Anti-submarine Admiral Panteleyev and medium ocean tanker Pechenga and guided-missile cruiser Varyag.

## ART & CULTURE

### 9TH INTERNATIONAL SAND ART FESTIVAL AND 31ST KONARK FESTIVAL



**Date:** 5th December 2020

The 9th edition of International Sand Art Festival and 31st edition of Konark Festival was held in Odisha.

#### Key Points:

- 9th International Sand Art Festival was held at Chandrabhaga Beach of Konark, Puri district of Odisha.
- Sudarsan Pattnaik, the world-renowned sand artist was the Chief Curator of this festival.
- The festival displayed the sand arts sculpted by artists from India, Mexico, Spain, Singapore, Norway, Germany and from many other countries.
- The theme for this festival was 'environment' and 'COVID-19'.
- 31st Konark Festival was jointly organized by Odisha Tourism and Odissi Research Centre.
- This festival showcased various dance forms like Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Kathakali.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### SINGAPORE AGENCY APPROVES SALE OF LAB-GROWN MEAT



**Date:** 7th December 2020

The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) has approved the sale of a lab-grown meat product.

**Key Points:**

- This is the first time cultured meat has been cleared for sale anywhere in the world.
- The product approved by the SFA is cultured chicken, produced by US-based East Just.
- Objective behind this development is to offer alternatives to traditional meat products that could feed a lot more people, reduce the threat of zoonotic diseases, and mitigate the environmental impact of meat consumption.



disha  
Nurturing Ambitions

# PEOPLE

## NATIONAL

### APPOINTMENTS

#### KULDEEP HANDOO



**Date:** 6th December 2020

**Why in news:** Appointed as the Brand Ambassador for 'Fit India Movement'.

#### Key Points:

- Srinagar born Wushu coach and the first Dronacharya Awardee from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Kuldeep Handoo is appointed as the Ambassador of Fit India movement.
- He won 11 gold medals in National and 6 in International stage, is the Wushu coach of Team India.
- Under his guidance Athletes have won two gold medals at the world championship and one at the World Cup.
- He also serves as Inspector of police in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### AMIT KHARE



**Date:** 7th December 2020

**Why in news:** Appointed to head a committee constituted by the education Ministry.

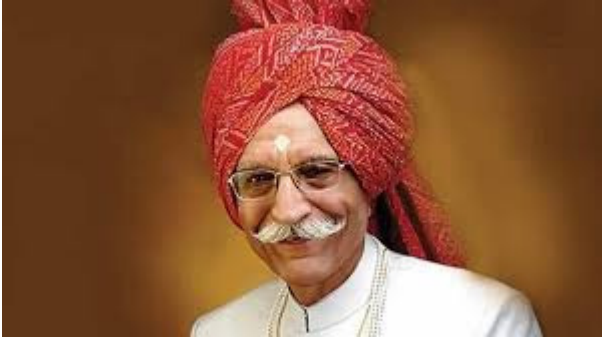
#### Key Points:

- The Union Education Ministry has set up a task force for preparing a roadmap on imparting technical education in Mother Tongue.
- The task force was set up under the chairmanship of Secretary, Higher Education Amit Khare.

- Senior bureaucrat from Jharkhand cadre Amit Khare, who blew the lid off the infamous fodder scam in Bihar has earlier served as the secretary to the information and broadcasting ministry.

## OBITUARY

### MAHASHAY DHARAMPAL GULATI



**Date:** 3rd December 2020

Mahashay Dharampal Gulati, the owner of the iconic spice brand MDH- Mahashian Di Hatti passed away at the age of 98.

#### Key Points:

- Fondly called as ‘dadaji’ or ‘Mahashayji’, Dharampal Gulati started from his shop in Karol Bagh and went on to build MDH in one of the leading spices manufacturers of India.
- Dharampal Gulati was also India’s highest-paid consumer product CEO for 2017 during which he took home over Rs. 21 crores as a salary.
- In 2019, he received Padma Bhushan from President Ram Nath Kovind.

## INTERNATIONAL

## AWARDS & HONOURS

### AR REHMAN



**Date:** 2nd December 2020

**Why in news:** Appointed as the Ambassador of the BAFTA’s initiative called ‘BAFTA Breakthrough India 2020-21’.



## Key Points:

- Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer, AR Rahman has been roped in as ambassador of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India.
- The BAFTA Breakthrough initiative is part of the Academy's year-long programme to support new talent, coming up in the film, games and television industries in the UK, China, India and the US and gives them access to unique career development and mentoring opportunities.
- Under this initiative, BAFTA will identify and support up to five exceptional talents working in film, games or television in India in 2020.

## GITANJALI RAO



**Date:** 5th December 2020

**Why in news:** Become the first 'Kid of the Year' on the Time magazine cover.

## Key Points:

- Time named Rao "Kid of the Year". Rao is the first person to receive this designation.
- Gitanjali Rao (born 2005) is an American inventor, author, scientist and a STEM promoter.
- She won the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge in 2017.
- She was recognized as Forbes 30 Under 30 for her innovations. She was named TIME Top young innovator in 2020 for her innovations and "innovation workshops" she conducts across the globe.



# ISSUES

## NATIONAL

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

#### KARNATAKA MLC DISQUALIFIED FOR BEING APPOINTED AS A MINISTER



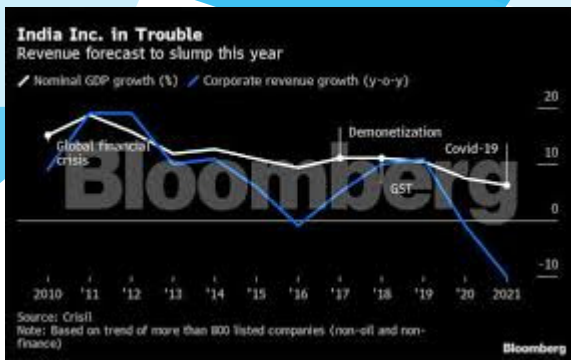
**Date:** 1st December 2020

#### **Key Highlights:**

- The Karnataka High Court has held that Vishwanath stands disqualified under the anti-defection law and hence cannot be inducted into the state cabinet.
- The High Court held that AH Vishwanath has incurred disqualification under Article 164(1B) and Article 361 B of the Indian Constitution.
- A petition was filed in the court alleging that AH Vishwanath had been appointed as members of the Legislative Council for the sole purpose of making them ministers, despite the fact that Vishwanath had lost the bye-polls.
- The petitioner argued that he was still disqualified as per the Supreme Court judgement on November 19, which upheld former Assembly Speaker Ramesh Kumar's orders for disqualification.
- The plea maintained that a disqualified member can become eligible to hold the position of a minister only if they win the bye-elections from the same constituency.

### ECONOMY

#### HISTORIC RECESSION: ON INDIA'S GDP SLUMP



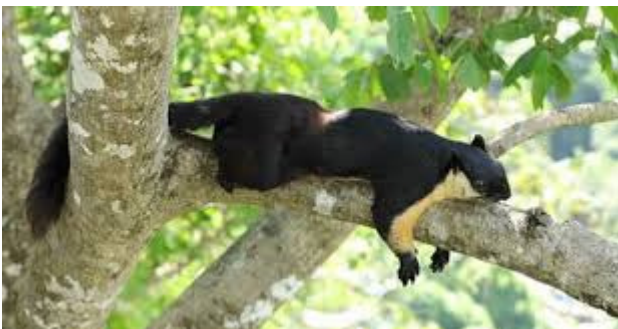
**Date:** 4th December 2020

### Key Highlights:

- Provisional estimates of GDP for the second quarter of the 2020-21 show economic output shrank by 7.5%, following the 23.9% contraction in the first quarter.
- The economy shrank for a second successive quarter, marking a recession for the first time in independent India's history.
- The overall GDP figure of ₹33,14,167 crore (at 2011-12 prices) reveals output has slid back to the lowest level in 12 quarters.
- Government consumption spending that was hitherto a bulwark contracted by 22% revealing the precarious state of public finances.
- In the real economy, electricity and other utility services joined agriculture in posting growth, expanding 4.4%, as the post-lockdown resumption of industrial activity lifted power and water consumption.

### ENVIRONMENT

#### MALAYAN GIANT SQUIRREL COULD DECLINE BY 90% IN INDIA BY 2050: ZSI



**Date:** 4th December 2020

### Key Highlights:

- A recent study by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has projected that numbers of the Malayan Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) could decline by 90% in India by 2050.

- According to the ZSI, destruction of its habitat could restrict the squirrel to only southern Sikkim and North Bengal by 2050.
- Only 43.38% of the squirrel's original habitat in India is now favourable to it.
- By 2050, the favourable zone could shrink to 2.94% of the area the species was meant to inhabit.
- The Malayan Giant Squirrel is one of the world's largest squirrel species. IUCN Status: Near Threatened.
- In India it is found in West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.

## INTERNATIONAL

### INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

#### BANGLADESH BEGINS SHIFTING ROHINGYA



**Date:** 4th December 2020

#### **Key Highlights:**

- Bangladesh has begun transferring hundreds of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char (a low-lying island in an area prone to cyclones and floods), with rights groups alleging that people were being coerced into leaving.
- The island was formed from a build-up of silt in the Bay of Bengal only 20 years ago, and concerns have been consistently raised about Bhasan Char's exposure to extreme weather and distance from the mainland in emergencies since Bangladesh first raised the idea in 2015.
- Rohingyas are an Ethnic group, mostly Muslims. They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar.
- Described by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as "one of, if not, the most discriminated people in the world".

- About 860,000 Rohingya live in the world's largest and most densely populated refugee camp in southern Bangladesh.
- The Myanmar and Bangladesh governments continue to negotiate terms for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

## ENVIRONMENT

### DETERIORATING GREAT BARRIER REEF



**Date:** 6th December 2020

#### Key Highlights:

- Recently, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has highlighted that Australia's Great Barrier Reef is in a critical state and deteriorating as climate change warms up the waters in which it lies.
- Barrier Reef is the world's most extensive and spectacular coral reef ecosystem composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands.
- The reef is located in the Coral Sea (North-East Coast), off the coast of Queensland, Australia.
- This reef structure is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps.
- Coral along large swathes of the 2,300-kilometre reef have been killed by rising sea temperatures linked to climate change, leaving behind skeletal remains in a process known as coral bleaching.
- When corals face stress by changes in conditions such as temperature, light, or nutrients, they expel the symbiotic algae zooxanthellae living in their tissues, causing them to turn completely white. This phenomenon is called coral bleaching.



# IDEAS

## NATIONAL

### HEALTHCARE

#### ZEBRAFISH BEING USED AS A RESEARCH MODEL TO PROMOTE HEART REGENERATION



**Date:** 4th December 2020

#### Key Features:

- Recently, Scientists at Pune-based Agharkar Research Institute have used the Zebrafish as a research model and identified genes that can promote heart regeneration.
- Zebrafish is a tiny freshwater fish barely 2-3 cm long found in the tropical and subtropical regions.
- The fish is native to South Asia's Indo-Gangetic plains, where they are mostly found in the paddy fields and even in stagnant water and streams.
- It can efficiently regenerate its damaged heart within a short time period.
- The zebrafish is an important and widely used vertebrate model organism in scientific research, for example in drug development, in particular pre-clinical development.
- It is also notable for its regenerative abilities and has been modified by researchers to produce many transgenic strains.

### DEFENCE

#### MARCOS



**Date:** 5th December 2020

**Key Features:**

- MARCOS are being deployed in the Eastern Ladakh alongside the Indian Army against the Chinese military.
- They are present in the vicinity of the Pangong Tso lake where they will soon be conducting missions using boats.
- The Marine Commandos are abbreviated as MARCOS and officially called the Marine Commando Force (MCF) was founded in February 1987.
- It is the special forces unit of the Indian Navy that is responsible for conducting special operations.
- MARCOS are capable of operating in all types of environments; at sea, in air and on land.
- The MARCOS regularly undertake specialised maritime operations in Jammu and Kashmir through the Jhelum River and Wular Lake.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### ‘DAMARU’ INSPIRED LATTICE



**Date:** 7th December 2020

**Key Features:**

- IIT Kanpur Researchers have developed ‘Damaru’ Inspired Lattice that finds applications in stealth submarines and high speed trains.
- With the use of a micro-structured hour-glass shaped meta-structure in the lattice unit, one can get a wider variation of propagation and stop bands.
- Inspiration of the lattice has come from a two-headed drum called ‘Damaru’ or which is used in ancient Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism.
- In this application, the researchers have also shown that the nature of stiffness of a vibrating medium could be altered drastically by controlling the lattice micro-structure from regular honeycomb to auxetic honeycomb structure.
- This has wide applications in the field of vibration isolation in high speed trains, stealth submarines and helicopter rotors.

## SPACE

### AUSTRALIAN SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY PATHFINDER (ASKAP)



Date: 4th December 2020

#### Key Features:

- The Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) has recently mapped over three million galaxies in a record 300 hours during its first all-sky survey.
- ASKAP is a powerful telescope developed and operated by Australia's science agency CSIRO.
- ASKAP is currently conducting pilot surveys of the sky before it can begin large-scale projects from 2021 onward.
- ASKAP surveys are designed to map the structure and evolution of the Universe, which it does by observing galaxies and the hydrogen gas that they contain.
- One of its most important features is its wide field of view. It has been able to take panoramic pictures of the sky in great detail.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### HL-2M TOKAMAK: THE ARTIFICIAL SUN OF CHINA



Date: 6th December 2020



## Key Features:

- China successfully powered up its “artificial sun” nuclear fusion reactor for the first time marking a great advance in the country’s nuclear power research capabilities.
- The HL-2M Tokamak reactor is China’s largest and most advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device.
- Name of the mission is Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST). It is located in Sichuan province.
- The reactor is often called an “artificial sun” due to the enormous heat and power it produces.
- It uses a powerful magnetic field to fuse hot plasma and can reach temperatures of over 150 million degrees Celsius which is approximately ten times hotter than the core of the sun.
- Scientists hope that the device can potentially unlock a powerful clean energy source.



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The logo features the word "disha" in a large, lowercase, light blue font. Below it, the tagline "Nurturing Ambitions" is written in a smaller, all-caps, light blue font. A large, light blue arrow points upwards from behind the text.