

Week 2 Current Affairs Update

8th - 14th December 2020

EVENTS

NATIONAL

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

INDIA MOBILE CONGRESS 2020



Date: 8th December 2020

The inaugural session of India Mobile Congress 2020 (IMC 2020) was addressed by PM Narendra Modi.

Key Points:

- The India Mobile Congress 2020 is organised by the Department of Telecommunications and Cellular Operators Association of India.
- Theme for India Mobile Congress 2020: 'Inclusive Innovation- Smart, Secure and Sustainable'.
- The main motto behind this IMC 2020 is to promote 'Digital Inclusivity', 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', 'Sustainable development', entrepreneurship and innovation.
- It also focuses on foreign and local investments, technology, R&D in telecom.
- PM Modi addressed about forming a task force which will think of a better way of handling electronic waste and will create a circular economy. He also emphasized his view on 5G Technology.

REPORTS & INDICES

URBAN GOVERNANCE INDEX



Date: 9th December 2020

Recently, the Urban Governance Index was released by Praja Foundation.

Key Points:

- The index is topped by Odisha with a score of 56.86%.
- The second and third position is marked by Maharashtra (55.15%) and Chhattisgarh (49.68%) respectively.
- This index describes the analysis of local self-government in Indian cities. It is an indicator of the level of decentralisation in urban governance.
- The lower three ranks are marked by Meghalaya (14.82%), Manipur (14.63%) and Nagaland (13.37%).
- The index ranking was calculated by considering themes like: Empowered local elected representatives and legislative structure; empowered city administration; empowered citizens and fiscal empowerment.

POLICIES & GOVERNANCE

VANCHIT IKAI SAMOOH AUR VARGON KIAARTHIK SAHAYTA (VISVAS) YOJANA



Date: 9th December 2020

National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) entered into MoA With Central Bank of India for implementation of Vanchit Ikai Samooch aur Vargon ki Aarthik Sahayta (VISVAS) Yojana.

Key Points:

- It is an Interest subvention Scheme for financial empowerment of economically marginalized OBC/SC Self Help Groups (SHGs) & Individuals.
- Under this scheme, interest subvention will be provided to Self Help Groups with 100% OBC members and OBC individuals who have taken loan for various income generating activities from those Lending Institutions who have signed MoA with NBCFDC.
- The scheme will benefit OBC/SC SHGs with loans up to Rs.4 Lakh and OBC/SC individuals with loan up to Rs.2 Lakh with a quick interest subvention benefit of 5% directly into the standard accounts of borrowing beneficiaries.

FOUNDATION STONE LAID FOR NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING



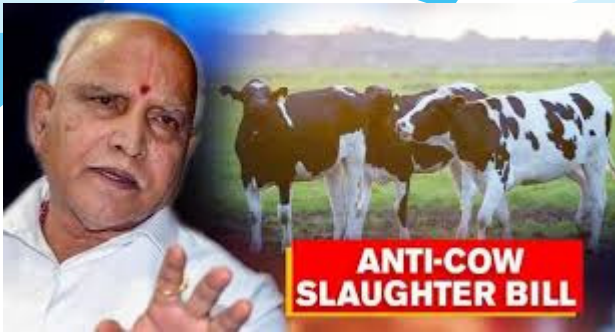
Date: 11th December 2020

Indian Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the New Parliament Building, a part of the ₹ 20,000 crore Central Vista project.

Key Points:

- The four-story building will be triangular and its interiors will have three national symbols – the lotus, the peacock and the banyan tree – as its themes.
- The parliament building will be ready in 2022.
- The old Parliament building will be turned into a museum.
- The new Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha halls will have increased seating capacities.
- Dholpur stone will be the primary construction material and red granite may replace red sandstone in some interior sections.
- The building will be equipped with modern audio-visual communication systems.
- It will also be fully wheelchair- and disabled-access friendly.

KARNATAKA'S NEW ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER BILL



Date: 11th December 2020

Karnataka passed the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill (2020) in the Assembly.

Key Points:

- The Bill envisages a ban on all forms of cattle slaughter and stringent punishment for offenders.
- 'Beef' is defined as the flesh of cattle in any form. The word 'cattle' is defined as "cow, calf of a cow and bull, bullock, and he or she buffalo below the age of 13 years".
- The Bill also terms shelters established for the protection and preservation of cattle registered with the Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries as 'gau shalas'.
- Police officers ranked sub-inspector and above or a competent authority will have the power to search premises and seize cattle and materials used or intended to use to commit the offence.
- Cow slaughter is termed as a cognizable offence in the bill. Violators can attract 3 to 7 years of imprisonment.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



Date: 11th December 2020

Human Rights Day was celebrated by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Key Points:

- It is celebrated on the 10th December every year to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- The Declaration recognizes that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of mankind are the foundation of justice, freedom and peace in the world.
- 2020 Theme: Recover Better – Stand Up for Human Rights.

AWARDS & HONOURS

INVEST INDIA WINS UN INVESTMENT PROMOTION AWARD



Date: 9th December 2020

The United Nations (UNCTAD) has declared Invest India- the National Investment Promotion Agency of India- as a winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.

Key Points:

- The award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements and best practices of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) across the globe.
- This United Nations Investment Promotion Award is the most coveted award for Investment Promotion Agencies.
- UNCTAD is a central agency that monitors performance of IPAs and identifies global best practices.
- Germany, South Korea and Singapore have been some of the past winners of the award.
- Invest India is the national investment promotion and facilitation agency set up in 2009.

GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE 2020



Date: 9th December 2020

A primary school teacher from Maharashtra's Solapur district has won the one-million US dollar Global Teacher Prize 2020 for promoting girls' education.

Key Points:

- Ranjitsinh Disale from Paritewadi village, was awarded in recognition of his efforts to promote girls' education and initiating a quick-response (QR) coded textbook revolution in India.
- He has announced that he will share half of the one million dollar award money with the nine other finalists so that they too may continue their good work.
- The award was established by the London-based Varkey Foundation and is given in partnership with UNESCO.
- In the past, Ranjitsinh has been named as the Innovative Researcher of the Year 2016 and has featured in Satya Nadella's book 'Hit Refresh'.

BANKING & FINANCE

DIGITAL SAKSHAM—MASTERCARD, NI-MSME AND CII



Date: 10th December 2020

The Mastercard, ni-msme (National Institute for MSME) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) have collaborated to launch Digital Saksham.

Key Points:

- The Digital Saksham is basically a capacity-building initiative which creates awareness about the digitization of the MSME sector in India.
- It is the 3-year programme in which around 3 lakh and more MSMEs will be trained to become part of the digital world and adopt digital technology in their operations.
- The programme will be having three stages over three years and will be having approaches like outreach, capacity building and adoption of digital tools.
- It will be rolled out in 25 cities in seven states of India.
- The Digital Saksham will offer information, skills and tools to the MSMEs so that they can increase their financial security and expand their businesses.

ART & CULTURE

GWALIOR AND ORCHHA INCLUDED IN WORLD HERITAGE CITY



Date: 10th December 2020

Gwalior and Orchha of Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO.

Key Points:

- Orchha located in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh is popular for its temples and palaces.
- It was the capital of the Bundela kingdom in the 16th century.
- The famous spots in the town are Raj Mahal, Jehangir Mahal, Ramraja Temple, Rai Praveen Mahal, and Laxminarayan Mandir.
- Gwalior was established in the 9th century. It was ruled by Gurjar Pratihara Rajvansh, Tomar, Baghel Kachvaho and Scindias.
- The memorabilia left by them is found in abundance in memorials, forts and palaces in the area.
- It is known for its palaces and temples, including the intricately carved Sas Bahu Ka Mandir temple.

INTERNATIONAL BHARATI FESTIVAL 2020



Date: 14th December 2020

The International Bharati Festival 2020 was virtually addressed by PM Narendra Modi.

Key Points:

- The festival was organised by Vanavil Cultural Centre, Chennai.
- The International Bharati Festival 2020 was organised to mark the 138th Birth Anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathi, who was Tamil writer, poet and journalist along with Indian Independence Activist and social reformer.
- PM Modi also conferred the 2020 Bharathi Award to the writer, Seeni Viswanathan.

ENVIRONMENT

LAKSHADWEEP DECLARED AN ORGANIC UNION TERRITORY



Date: 10th December 2020

Entire Lakshadweep group of islands has been declared as an organic agricultural area under the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) of India.

Key Points:

- Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100% organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.
- Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands. There are three main groups of islands: (1) Amindivi Islands; (2) Laccadive Islands; (3) Minicoy Island.

- All are tiny islands of coral origin (Atoll) and are surrounded by fringing reefs.
- Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) is a process of certifying organic products, which ensures that their production takes place in accordance with laid-down quality standards.

5TH INDIA WATER IMPACT SUMMIT (IWIS)



Date: 14th December 2020

The 5th edition of India Water Impact Summit was held virtually.

Key Points:

- The theme for the 5th IWIS was: Arth Ganga: River Conservation Synchronised Development.
- It was organised by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga).
- The 5th IWIS was organised to discuss water-related issues and steps taken to save it.
- The participated stakeholders discussed model solutions developed to address water-related problems.
- The IWIS summit helps to strengthen the cooperation and interaction between investors and stakeholders in the water sector and builds river management strategies for India.

9TH SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT



Date: 15th December 2020

The 9th edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit was held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

Key Points:

- The theme for the summit: “Emerging Pathways for Building a Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration”.
- The summit was hosted by Sustainable Development Forum Uttaranchal and was organised by Indian Mountain Initiative.
- The summit was held to build pathways toward a resilient and sustainable mountain economy.
- It was held to discuss the post-COVID 19 scenario, Climate Change, water security and innovation.
- The dignitaries also held discussions about disaster risk reduction in Indian Himalayas.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

New ‘Policy on School Bag 2020’



Date: 11th December 2020

According to the new Policy on School Bag, School bags should not be more than 10% of the body weight of students across classes I to X and there should be no homework till class II.

Key Points:

- The new Policy also recommends that the weight of the bag needs to be monitored on a regular basis in schools.
- They should be light-weight with two padded and adjustable straps that can squarely fit on both shoulders and no wheeled carriers should be allowed.
- The policy even recommends that the weight of each textbook may come printed on them by the publishers.

- The recommendations have been arrived at based on various surveys and studies conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- The 'Policy also recommended good quality mid-day meals and potable water to all the students so that they need not carry lunch boxes or water bottles.
- The policy said there should be no bags in pre-primary.

UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION FUND (USOF) SCHEME



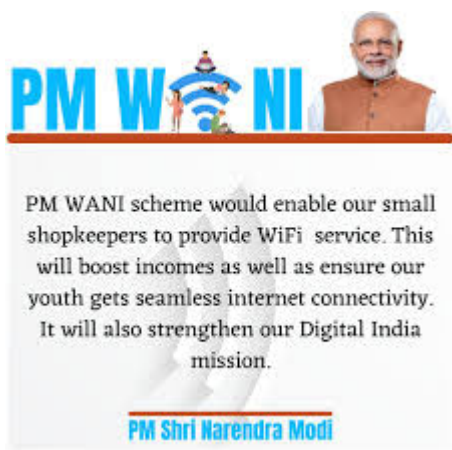
Date: 11th December 2020

The Union Cabinet has approved the provision of a Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) Scheme.

Key Points:

- Under the scheme, Mobile Coverage in Arunachal Pradesh and two Districts of Assam (Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao) shall be provided under the Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for North Eastern Region (NER).
- The project envisages to provide mobile coverage to around 2 thousands of uncovered villages at an estimated cost of about Rs.2,029 crore including operational expenses for five years.
- The project would be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund.
- The project is targeted to be completed by December, 2022.

PM WANI SCHEME



Date: 11th December 2020

Recently, in a bid to fuel broadband internet proliferation across the country, the Government of India launched PM WANI (Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) Scheme.

Key Points:

- The scheme aims to bring large scale deployment of Wi-Fi hotspots through the country to drive up connectivity options and improve digital access.
- The scheme envisages setting up of public Wi-Fi networks and access points by local Kirana and neighbourhood shops through public data offices (PDO will be set up on the lines of Public Call Offices (PCOs)) that will not involve any licence, fee or registration.
- Apart from, Public Wi-Fi being a low-cost option to reach unserved citizens and grow the economy, it can revolutionise the tech world and significantly improve Wi-Fi availability across the length and breadth of India.
- This is being seen as an attempt by the government to elevate wireless internet connectivity in the country.

‘JAGANANNA JEEVA KRANTHI’ SCHEME – ANDHRA PRADESH



Date: 13th December 2020

The Government of Andhra Pradesh launched the 'Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi' scheme.

Key Points:

- The scheme aims to distribute 2.49 lakh sheep and goats to SC, ST women belonging to the age group between 45-60 years in order to improve their standard of living.
- The 2.49 lakh sheep and goat will be distributed in three phases. Each unit consists of 15 sheep or goat.
- Also, the state government has signed MoU with Allana Group for the purpose of procurement of sheep and goats.
- The scheme has been launched with an outlay of Rs 1869 crore.

PROGRAMME OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILING OF PM SVANIDHI



Date: 14th December 2020

A programme of Socio-Economic Profiling of PM SVANidhi beneficiaries and their families was recently launched as an additional component of PM SVANidhi Scheme.

Key Points:

- Under this, a complete profile of each PM SVANidhi beneficiary and their family members will be prepared.
- Based on the profiled data, benefits of the various eligible Central Schemes would be extended to them for their socio-economic upliftment.
- Context: PM SVANidhi scheme should not be seen merely from the perspective of extending loans to street vendors but should also be seen as an instrument for outreach to street vendors and their families for their overall development.
- In the first phase, 125 cities have been selected for the programme.
- The profile will identify potential eligibility of beneficiaries and their family members for select Central Government schemes and facilitate linkages.
- Prime Minister Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) is a scheme by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to provide affordable working capital loan up to 10 thousand rupees to Street Vendors for facilitating resumption of their livelihoods adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

KLI PROJECT: PROVISION OF SUBMARINE OPTICAL FIBRE CABLE CONNECTIVITY



Date: 11th December 2020

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project).

Key Points:

- The Project shall provide a direct communication link through a dedicated submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) between Kochi and 11 Islands of Lakshadweep.
- Those 11 islands of Lakshadweep are: Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Agati, Amini, Androth, Minicoy, Bangaram, Bitra, Chetlat, Kiltan & Kadmat.
- The Project would be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund.
- The project will vastly improve telecommunication facilities in the Lakshadweep Islands by providing large bandwidth.
- The project is targeted to be completed by May 2023.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO TO LAUNCH CMS-01



Date: 15th December 2020

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be launching CMS-01, which is the communication satellite.

Key Points:

- It will be launched on 17th Dec 2020 with the help of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C50).
- The launch will take place from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- The CMS-01 is basically a replacement of GSAT-12.
- CMS-01 is India's 42nd Communication Satellite and will be launched to provide services in the Extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum, which includes Indian mainland, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands.

ECONOMY

‘BSE E-AGRICULTURE MARKETS LTD’ (BEAM)



Date: 15th December 2020

The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) launched ‘BSE E-Agriculture Markets Ltd’ (BEAM).

Key Points:

- BEAM is an electronic spot platform which is launched for agricultural commodities.
- BEAM aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the agriculture market of India by enhancing the strength of BSE in the finance sector, market technology and its vibrant ecosystem.
- BEAM will be a platform which will serve at the national level and will be an institutionalized, electronic and transparent commodity spot trading mode platform which will develop a ‘single market’ mechanism, the vision of the Prime Minister.
- It will offer sports transactions of Agri commodities across value chains which will include producers, intermediaries and customers.

INTERNATIONAL

SUMMITS & CONFERENCES

IIT 2020 GLOBAL SUMMIT



Date: 8th December 2020

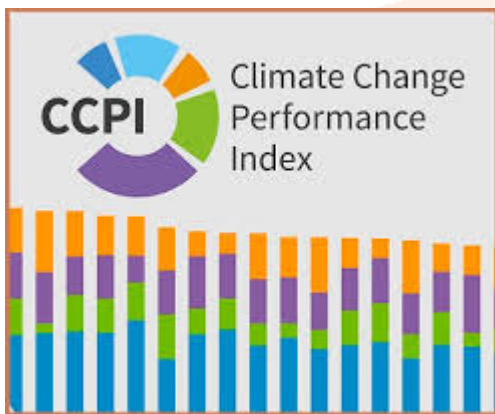
Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addressed the IIT 2020 Global Summit.

Key Points:

- The summit was organized by PanIIT USA, which is an all-volunteer team of IIT alumni.
- The theme for IIT 2020 Global Summit was: 'The Future is Now'.
- The summit observed the discussions about the global economy, technology, innovation, health and New Education Policy 2020.
- PM Modi addressed the summit with the 'Reform, Perform, Transform' principle of GOI.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX



Date: 9th December 2020

The New Climate Institute, Germanwatch and CAN (Climate Action Network) has released the Global Climate Change Performance Index.

Key Points:

- India ranked 10th in this index with a score of 63.98.
- None of the countries marked the first three positions in this index as none of the countries is on that level of Paris climate targets which aims to implement strategies to limit global warming below 2 or below 1.5 degree Celsius.
- Sweden, the United Kingdom and Denmark marked the 4th, 5th and 6th rank in the Global Climate Change Performance Index.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

6TH INDIA-JAPAN ICT JOINT WORKING GROUP MEET



Date: 10th December 2020

The 6th India-Japan ICT Joint Working Group meeting was held virtually.

Key Points:

- The meeting was held under both nation's ICT (Information and Communication Technology) objectives.
- This meeting observed the discussion on boosting cooperation in the 5G sector.
- They also held discussions related to wireless planning, and standardization of technology as well as its utilization.
- They adopted a partnership project at Asian Institute of Gastroenterology in Hyderabad. This project includes the usage of AI by software to assist doctors in Colonoscopy diagnosis.

INDIA-UZBEKISTAN SIGN 9 PACTS



Date: 12th December 2020

India and Uzbekistan have entered into nine agreements in a virtual summit held to discuss bilateral relations of both nations.

Key Points:

- During the summit, various bilateral talks were held between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev.
- They discussed extremism, terrorism and radicalism.

- They signed an agreement to combat the threat of terrorism by “destroying” terrorist safe-havens, networks and funding channels.
- They also signed agreements in the field of renewable energy, Digital Technologies, Community development projects, cybersecurity, and digital technologies.
- Also, India has approved \$448 million of Line of Credit for four development projects in Uzbekistan.

AWARDS & HONOURS

FORBES 2020 LIST OF 100 MOST POWERFUL WOMEN



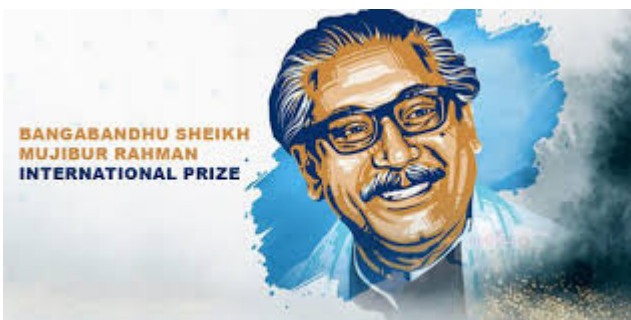
Date: 10th December 2020

The 17th Annual Forbes Power List of 100 Most Powerful Women was released.

Key Points:

- As per this list, Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman is among the 100 most powerful women. She is ranked at 41st position in the list.
- Also, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman of Biocon Limited is featured at 68th rank position in the list.
- The top three holders of the Forbes 100 Most Powerful Women 2020 are: Angela Merkel (Chancellor, Germany) (First Rank), Christine Lagarde (President of European central Bank) (Second Rank) and Kamala Harris (Vice President, US) (Third Rank).

UNESCO AWARD FOR CREATIVE ECONOMY



Date: 15th December 2020

UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of ‘creative economy’ in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Key Points:

- It shall start from November 2021.
- The \$50,000 award will be given away once in two years for global economic initiatives of the youth.
- The award will recognise exceptional initiatives taken by cultural workers and organizations in the development of the creative economy.
- UNESCO has declared 2021 as ‘International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development’.
- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the “Father of the Nation” in Bangladesh.

SUMMITS & CONFERENCES

14TH ADMM PLUS MEET 2020



Date: 11th December 2020

The 14th ADMM (ASEAN Defence Ministers Meet)-Plus Meeting was held virtually.

Key Points:

- The meet was hosted by Vietnam.
- It was held to mark the 10th anniversary of ADMM Plus. ADMM Plus is basically a group of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN Nations and its 8 partner nations.
- It was attended by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.
- He urged all the participating dignitaries to develop cooperation to address the issues and threats of bioterrorism, transnational trafficking and COVID-19 pandemic.

CLIMATE AMBITION SUMMIT 2020



Date: 15th December 2020

The United Nations, United Kingdom and France co-hosted the Climate Ambition Summit 2020 which was held virtually recently.

Key Points:

- The Summit marked the five years of the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- The summit aims to bring together leaders to make new commitments to tackle climate change and deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- The United Kingdom pledged to double its climate finance contribution to USD 15.5 billion over the next five years.
- The European Investment Bank announced a goal of 50% of investments going toward the climate and environment sectors by 2025.

HEALTHCARE

ASIA PACIFIC VACCINE ACCESS FACILITY (APVAX)—BY ADB



Date: 13th December 2020

The Asian Development Bank has launched the Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX).

Key Points:

- It is launched for developing countries who are members of ADB.
- The APVAX is basically a \$9 billion initiative which will help developing member nations of ADB to procure and deliver coronavirus vaccines.

- This initiative will offer rapid and equitable support for procurement and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines.
- The APVAX will help to meet and tackle challenges faced due to pandemic and to focus on economic recovery.
- Also, ADB is planning to make available COVID-19 vaccine import facility to its member's nations.

ENERGY

INDIA AND QATAR TO SETUP ENERGY TASK FORCE



Date: 14th December 2020

India and Qatar have decided to establish a task force on energy.

Key Points:

- The decision is taken to strengthen cooperation in the energy sector.
- The Energy Task Force will help to identify specific projects in India's energy sector for investments from Qatar.
- The task force will be represented by the vice president of Qatar petroleum and a senior officer from the Petroleum Ministry of India.
- The decision was jointly taken through a telephone conversation held by Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan, and Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and CEO Qatar Petroleum.



PEOPLE

NATIONAL

APPOINTMENTS

UDAY SHANKAR



Date: 8th December 2020

Why in news: Appointed as President of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Key Points:

- Uday Shankar has been appointed as the President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) for the year 2020-21.
- He succeeded the incumbent President Sangita Reddy.
- Shankar is currently serving as the President of Walt Disney Company Asia Pacific and Chairman of Star India and Walt Disney Company India.
- He has become the first-ever media executive in India to lead FICCI, which is India's oldest national industry chamber.

ANIL SONI



Date: 8th December 2020

Why in news: Appointed as inaugural Chief Executive Officer of the newly launched WHO Foundation.

Key Points:

- Indian-origin global health expert Anil Soni has been appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer of the newly launched The WHO Foundation.
- The Geneva-headquartered Foundation is an independent grant-making agency launched this May to complement the World Health Organization's efforts (WHO) in addressing urgent global health challenges.
- As a separate legal entity, the Foundation acts as a platform for new types of public-private engagement, while protecting the WHO's neutrality and independence as the world's leading international health authority.
- Mr Soni will assume his role as The WHO Foundation's inaugural Chief Executive Officer on January 1 next year.

OBITUARY

NARINDER SINGH KAPANY



Date: 10th December 2020

Narinder Singh Kapany, Father of Fibre Optics, passes away at 94.

Key Points:

- Indian-American physicist Narinder Singh Kapany, who is considered as the 'Father of Fibre Optics' has passed away.
- Kapany is credited with coining the term Fibre Optics in 1956.
- He was named as one of the seven "Unsung Heroes" by Fortune in their 'Businessmen of the Century' issue of November 22, 1999.
- DR Narinder Singh Kapany is among the 10 most renowned Sikhs in the world.
- He was the founding chairman of the Sikh Foundation and has been a major funder of its activities for over 50 years.

AWARDS & HONOURS

JOE BIDEN AND VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT KAMALA HARRIS



Date: 11th December 2020

Why in news: Named as the "Time's Person of the Year" 2020.

Key Points:

- Time magazine has named US President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris as 2020 "Person of the Year".
- Joe Biden and Kamala Harris created history by defeating US President Donald Trump in the US Presidential Elections, which culminated in November 2020.
- The Person of the Year is usually an individual, but multiple people have been named in the past.
- Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg last year became the youngest individual winner of the accolade.

CAROLINA ARAUJO



Date: 12th December 2020

Why in news: Won 2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians.

Key Points:

- Brazilian mathematician Dr. Carolina Araujo, has been conferred with the 2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians, for her outstanding work in algebraic geometry.

- Dr. Araujo is the first non-Indian women mathematician to receive this prize. Prior to her Ramdorai Sujatha, from India became the first woman to receive the award in 2006.
- The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians is awarded annually since 2005, by the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Italy to a researcher, less than 45 years of age, who has conducted outstanding research in a developing country.
- The prize is funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology (India) in association with Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters through the Abel Fund, and the International Mathematical Union (IMU).



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Nurturing Ambitions

ISSUES

NATIONAL

ENVIRONMENT

MOOLAMYLLIANG RECOVERS FROM RAT-HOLE MINING



Date: 8th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- Moolamyliang, a village in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, is making progress in becoming a greener place amid abandoned pits from the rat-hole mining.
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned hazardous rat-hole coal mining in Meghalaya in April 2014 and set a time limit for transporting the coal already mined till that time.
- The Jaintia Coal Miners and Dealers' Association claims there are some 60,000 coal mines across 360 villages in East Jaintia Hills district.
- Moolamyliang used to be one such village until the National Green Tribunal's ban.
- Rat-hole Mining is a term used for a hazardous and arduous mining technique where miners crawl into winding underground tunnels that are just 4-5 feet in diameter to extract coal from the deep seams with a pickaxe.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

BILLS PROPOSING DEATH PENALTY FOR RAPE BY MAHARASHTRA



Date: 10th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- In order to curb crimes against women and children in Maharashtra, the state cabinet approved two draft bills that propose death penalty for cases of rape, acid attack and child abuse.
- The two interconnected bills are the Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Act 2020 and the Special Court and Machinery for Implementation of Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law 2020.
- They seek to amend relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Criminal Procedural Code (CrPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.
- The bills also have provisions to increase the quantum of punishment, including life term, cover new categories of crimes, and propose a mechanism for speedy trials.

HEALTHCARE

ELURU ILLNESS



Date: 12th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- Over 550 people in Eluru town of Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district have been suffering from convulsions, seizures, dizziness and nausea.
- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has found traces of lead and nickel in blood samples of some victims.

- The primary suspicion is on water contamination by heavy metals.
- Scientists suspect that pesticide or insecticide has seeped into drinking water sources.
- Eluru receives water through canals from both Godavari and Krishna rivers.
- The canals pass through agricultural fields where runoff laced with pesticides mixes with water in the canals.

INTERNATIONAL

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Pakistan and China designated among countries of Particular Concern



Date: 9th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- Recently, the US State Department has designated Pakistan and China among eight other countries that are of particular concern for violation of religious freedom.
- Designation of the CPC is the top tier recommendation by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) when it comes to violation of international religious freedom.
- It is followed by Special Watch List Countries for severe violations.
- Nations on the CPC list: Pakistan, China, Myanmar, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
- USCIRF recommendation that India, Russia, Syria and Vietnam be also designated CPCs was not accepted by the US State Department.
- Governments that have engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom are included in the Special Watch List list.
- Comoros, Cuba, Nicaragua and Russia are on the list.

ANTITRUST SUIT AGAINST FACEBOOK



Date: 11th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- Two lawsuits filed by the United States federal government and governments of 48 US states and territories have put under the scanner the acquisition by Facebook of Instagram and WhatsApp.
- The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC)'s lawsuit accused Facebook of eliminating competition with the acquisitions — even though the FTC itself had approved the deals.
- The FTC has alleged that Facebook “is illegally maintaining its personal social networking monopoly through a years-long course of anticompetitive conduct”.
- The lawsuit followed a “lengthy investigation” by a “coalition of attorneys general of US States”.
- Facebook’s 2012 acquisition of Instagram for \$1 billion and the 2014 acquisition of WhatsApp for \$19 billion are being cited as attempts to illegally eliminate competition.

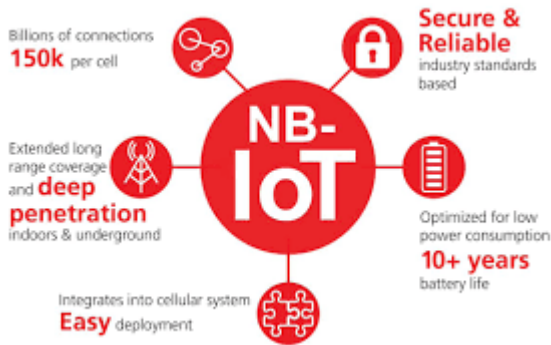


IDIEAS

NATIONAL

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

NARROW BAND INTERNET OF THINGS NETWORK (NB-IOT)



Date: 13th December 2020

Key Features:

- BSNL, in partnership with Skylotec India, announced a breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (Narrow Band-Internet of Things).
- This is indigenously developed by Skylo.
- It will connect with BSNL's satellite- ground infrastructure and provide PAN-India coverage, including Indian seas.
- This is the world's first satellite-based NB-IoT network.
- This new technology supports India's plan of bringing indigenous IoT connectivity to India's core sectors.
- This technology has already been tested successfully in Indian Railways, fishing vessels, and enabling connected vehicles across India.

HEALTHCARE

CO-WIN



Date: 12th December 2020

Key Points:

- The Indian Government has introduced a new digital platform called 'CO-WIN' for COVID-19 vaccine delivery.
- There will be a new mobile app as well with the same name that will allow people to register for the vaccine.
- The CO-WIN app is expected to be publicly available soon.
- The platform will be used for recording vaccine data and will form a database of healthcare workers too.
- All COVID-19 related data necessary for the delivery of the vaccine is presently being uploaded on the CO-WIN platform.
- Once people start to register for the app, the platform will upload bulk data on co-morbidity provided by local authorities.

ENVIRONMENT

FIRST ECO-BRIDGE FOR REPTILES AND SMALLER MAMMALS IN UTTARAKHAND



Date: 10th December 2020

Key Features:

- Uttarakhand recently built its first eco-bridge for reptiles and smaller mammals in Nainital district.
- Eco-ducts or eco-bridges aim to enhance wildlife connectivity that can be disrupted because of highways or logging.
- Eco-bridges include: (1) Canopy bridges usually for monkeys, squirrels and other arboreal species; (2) Concrete underpasses or overpass tunnels or viaducts usually for larger animals; (3) Amphibian tunnels or culverts.
- Usually these bridges are overlaid with planting from the area to give it a contiguous look with the landscape.

HEALTHCARE

HGCO19: INDIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS MRNA VACCINE



Date: 14th December 2020

Key Features:

- India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate, HGC019, has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials.
- HGC019 has been developed by Gennova, Pune and supported with seed grant under the Ind-CEPI mission of the Department of Biotechnology.
- The mRNA vaccines do not use the conventional model to produce immune response.
- Instead, they carry the molecular instructions to make the protein in the body through a synthetic RNA of the virus.
- mRNA-based vaccines are scientifically the ideal choice to address a pandemic because of their rapid developmental timeline.
- The mRNA vaccine is considered safe as is non-infectious, non-integrating in nature, and degraded by standard cellular mechanisms.

INTERNATIONAL

HEALTHCARE

LANCET CITIZENS' COMMISSION FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE



Date: 15th December 2020

Key Features:

- Recently, the Lancet Citizens' Commission on Reimagining India's Health System has been launched online which is a step towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India.
- It is a first-of-its-kind participatory, countrywide initiative, in collaboration with world's leading health journal The Lancet and the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University.
- Its objective is to enable participatory public engagement to develop a citizens' blueprint for the implementation of UHC.
- Its focus will be on the architecture of India's health system.



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Nurturing Ambitions