

Week 4 Current Affairs Update

22nd - 31st December 2020

EVENTS

NATIONAL

INFRASTRUCTURE

GREEN NATIONAL HIGHWAY CORRIDORS PROJECT



Date: 24th December 2020

The Green National Highway Corridors Project of GOI is to be developed in Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Key Points:

- For this purpose, the GOI has signed a loan agreement of \$500 million with the World Bank.
- This project will help to increase the capacity of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways which has set the aim to construct 783 km of highways in various areas by making use of safe and green technology designs.
- The Green National Highway Corridors Project will offer efficient transportation facilities for road users. It will offer connectivity and will thus increase trade opportunities.
- This project is effective because it promotes efficient use of water and construction materials to reduce depletion of natural resources which will help in reducing Greenhouse Gases.

BANKING & FINANCE

BARODA MILITARY SALARY PACKAGE



Date: 24th December 2020

Indian Army and Bank of Baroda have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for 'Baroda Military Salary Package'.

Key Points:

- The MoU lays down the basis on which banking services would be provided by Bank of Baroda to serving and retired personnel of Indian Army.
- Services under 'Baroda Military Salary Package' will be offered to serving and retired personnel of Indian Army through the Bank's network.
- It will offer Free Personal Accidental Insurance cover, Permanent Total Disability cover, Partial disability Cover and Higher Education Cover and Girl Child Marriage Cover on death in case of serving personnel.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

KERALA GOVERNMENT PARTNERED WITH UN WOMEN



Date: 24th December 2020

The government of Kerala has collaborated with UN women to establish the country's first gender data hub.

Key Points:

- For this purpose, the State government has signed MoU with UN Women.
- The MoU was signed to observe cooperation in sectors like to set up a Gender Data Centre at the Gender Park, to launch the 2nd edition of International Conference on Gender Equality and to boost engagement in global normative frameworks related to equality in gender and to empower women.
- The Gender Data Hub will provide a platform to initiate ambitious projects in which UN women will be offering capacity building and project development to the Gender Park for empowering women in South Asia.
- The Gender Data Hub will be based on the motto of the international conference on Gender Equality which was held in November 2015.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

MERGER OF 4 GOVERNMENT FILM MEDIA UNITS WITH NFDC



Date: 25th December 2020

The Union Cabinet approved the merger of four of its media units with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC).

Key Points:

- The 4 government-run film and media units merged are: (a) Directorate of Film Festivals (b) Films Division (c) Children's Film Society (d) National Film Archives of India.
- The film media units are merged under one platform in order to have proper systematic convergence of activities and resources.
- This merger will lead to maintaining synergy and efficiency of the media units along with the coordination among them.
- The merger will also help to prevent duplication of activities and direct savings to the exchequer.

- After the merger, the NFDC will be responsible to fulfill the aspects of production, promotion, and preservation of the filmic content, under the single management platform.

DEFENCE

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED MRSAM



Date: 25th December 2020

India successfully conducted the test-firing operation of Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM).

Key Points:

- It was test-fired from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur, Odisha.
- The MRSAM is jointly developed by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). It is manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Ltd.
- The MRSAM is basically a command control system which tracks missiles, radar and mobile launcher systems.
- It is developed by using active radar Radio Frequency seeker, bidirectional data link and phased array radar and is powered by the dual-pulse solid propulsion system.
- It has a strike range of 100kms and has supersonic Mach 2-speed feature.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DGNCC DIGITAL FORUM



Date: 25th December 2020

The Secretary to Defence, Dr Ajay Kumar launched the DGNCC Digital Forum.

Key Points:

- The DGNCC Digital Forum will be hosted by DGNCC website.
- The forum is launched to provide a platform to the National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets to share their experiences, opinions and suggestions of various NCC activities.
- They will also share opinions about NCC training, Social Service and Community Development and Sports & Adventure activities.
- Through this forum, they will also be able to address and share opinions related to National Security, National Building and National Integration.
- The forum will help to digitize NCC which will help to achieve Digital India vision of PM Narendra Modi.

HEALTHCARE

AYUSHMAN BHARAT PM-JAY SEHAT TO ALL RESIDENTS OF J&K



Date: 25th December 2020

The Prime Minister will launch Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT to extend health coverage to all the residents of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Key Points:

- The scheme will focus on providing financial risk protection and ensuring quality and affordable essential health services to all individuals and communities.
- The Scheme also provides free of cost insurance cover to all the residents of the UT of J&K.
- It provides financial cover upto Rs 5 lakh per family on a floater basis to all residents of the UT. It provides for operational extension of PM-JAY to 15 lakh (approx) additional families.
- The scheme will operate on insurance mode in convergence with PM-JAY.
- The hospitals empanelled under PM-JAY scheme shall provide services under this scheme as well.

ENVIRONMENT

TSO KAR WETLAND COMPLEX



Date: 25th December 2020

India has added Tso Kar Wetland Complex in Ladakh as its 42nd Ramsar site. It is also a second one in the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh.

Key Points:

- The Tso Kar Basin is a high-altitude wetland complex.
- It consists of two principal waterbodies, Startsapuk Tso, a freshwater lake and Tso Kar itself, a hypersaline lake situated in the Changthang region of Ladakh.
- It is called Tso Kar, meaning white lake, because of the white salt efflorescence found on the margins due to the evaporation of highly saline water.
- The Tso Kar Basin is an A1 Category Important Bird Area (IBA) as per Bird Life International and a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway.
- The site is also one of the most important breeding areas of the Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) in India.

TRANSPORT

FASTAG TO BECOME MANDATORY FOR ALL VEHICLES FROM 2021



Date: 25th December 2020

Recently, it was announced that FASTag is being made mandatory for all vehicles in India from 2021. It will be enforced from 1st of January, 2021.

Key Points:

- The FASTags were launched in the year 2016.
- Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had issued a notification in November this year making FASTag mandatory by 1st of January 2021 in old vehicles also sold before 1st December, 2017 through amendments in CMVR, 1989.
- As per Central Motor Vehicles Rules (CMVR), 1989, since 1st December 2017, the FASTag has been made mandatory for all registration of new four wheeled Vehicles and is being supplied by the Vehicle Manufacturer or their dealers.

BANKING & FINANCE

VADODARA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC) TO LAUNCH MUNICIPAL BONDS



Date: 25th December 2020

The Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) is expected to launch municipal bonds in January 2021.

Key Points:

- With this, it will become the third Urban Local Body (ULB) in Gujarat to use this method to raise money to fund development work sanctioned under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).
- Ahmedabad was the first city in south Asia to launch a municipal bond of Rs 100 crore in 1998.
- Surat Municipal Corporation was the second city in Gujarat to announce bonds in 2018.
- A municipal bond is a kind of debt instrument where investors offer loans to local governments.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SKILLS, MUMBAI



Date: 25th December 2020

Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship inaugurated the first batch of Indian Institute of Skills in Mumbai.

Key Points:

- The institute is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India and Tata Indian Institute of Skills.
- Formal agreement for setting up the institute has been signed between MSDE and TATA IIS on 11th November, 2020.
- The first batch at TATA-Indian Institute of Skills will commence training with two courses in Factory Automation, envisaged to be the foundation for future courses and Smart Manufacturing (Industry 4.0) technology and applications.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

‘E-SAMPADA’ WEB PORTAL AND MOBILE APP



Date: 28th December 2020

The Directorate of Estates, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs recently launched a new Web Portal and Mobile App, e-Sampada.

Key Points:

- The new application provides a single window for all these services including allotment for over one lakh government residential accommodations, office space allotment to government organisations, etc.

- In its endeavour to provide ‘One Nation, One System’, the erstwhile four websites (gpra.nic.in, eawas.nic.in, estates.gov.in, holidayhomes.nic.in), and two Mobile Apps (m-Awas & m-Ashoka5) of the Directorate of Estates have been integrated into one.
- The portal and app will help Indian citizens to lodge complaints, submit necessary documents and can also appear for virtual hearings.
- It will offer transparency and accountability in estate service activities like allotment, retention and regularization on a real-time basis.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

WATER QUALITY TESTING AND INNOVATION CHALLENGE



Date: 27th December 2020

The Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in partnership with National Jal Jeevan Mission launched the ‘Water Quality Testing Innovation Challenge’.

Key Points:

- The ‘Water Quality Testing Innovation Challenge’ is launched to develop portable devices for testing the quality of drinking water.
- The challenge will help to develop a portable device which can be used in each household to check the quality of drinking water.
- The portable device will also be useful to the officials working in water departments to test the water quality from water sources at various locations and accordingly develop remedies to address water contamination issues.
- The startups, MSMEs, innovators and corporate entities can participate in this challenge.

TRANSPORT

INDIA'S FIRST DRIVERLESS TRAIN IN DELHI METRO



Date: 28th December 2020

India's first driverless train on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line was inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi.

Key Points:

- The driver-less train on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line is fully automated which is developed to eliminate the possibility of human error while driving.
- It will travel by connecting Janakpuri West in West Delhi to Botanical Garden in Noida.
- This India's first driverless train has introduced a new era in mobility by offering safety and comfort to the travellers.

SCIENCE & TECH

INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL (IISF)-2020



Date: 28th December 2020

The 6th edition of India International Science Festival (IISF-2020) concluded recently.

Key Points:

- IISF is an annual event jointly organised by the Science & technology-related Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and Vijnana Bharati (Vibha).
- The first and second IISF were held in New Delhi, the third in Chennai, the fourth in Lucknow, and the fifth IISF was held in Kolkata.

- It is a festival to celebrate the achievements of India's scientific and technological advancements with students, innovators, craftsmen, farmers, scientists and technocrats from India and abroad.
- IISF-2020 was held on a virtual platform.
- Theme: 'Science for Atma Nirbhar Bharat and Global Welfare'.

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE SCIENTISTS MEET AT IISF 2020



Date: 28th December 2020

The Agricultural Scientists Meet was held at India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020.

Key Points:

- The meeting was inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Kailash Choudhary.
- This meet offers a platform to experts from the agricultural domain to discuss issues and advanced innovations in the Agri sector.
- The Agricultural Scientists Meet was attended by agricultural scientists, innovative farmers, teachers and students to discuss the topics like synergism and trade-offs in sustainable agriculture and Natural Resource Management (NRM).
- They also held discussions on policy frameworks, production systems and data-driven technologies in agriculture.

INFRASTRUCTURE

NEW BHAUPUR-NEW KHURJA SECTION OF EDFC



Date: 29th December 2020

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated New Khurja- New Bhaupur section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC).

Key Points:

- The New Khurja- New Bhaupur section of EDFC is 351 km long and is situated in Uttar Pradesh.
- PM Modi also inaugurated Operation Control Centre of EDFC at Prayagraj. It will be the command centre for the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor's entire route length.
- The New Khurja- New Bhaupur section of EDFC is built with a costing of Rs 5750 crore.
- This project has led to open new opportunities for local industries in Uttar Pradesh.
- It will also be decongesting the existing Delhi-Kanpur mainline and will allow Indian railways to run faster trains.

AWARDS & HONOURS

ICC AWARDS OF DECADE 2011-2020



Date: 29th December 2020

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Awards of the Decade 2011-2020 were announced.

Key Points:

- Below is the list of winners in each category:
- Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
- Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade: Steve Smith (Australia)
- ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli And ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry
- ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Rashid Khan (Afghanistan) And ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry
- ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kyle Coetzer (Scotland) And ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kathryn Bryce (Scotland)
- ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade: MS Dhoni

TRANSPORT

NATIONAL COMMON MOBILITY CARD (NCMC)



Date: 28th December 2020

Indian Prime Minister recently inaugurated fully operational National Common Mobility Card service on the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro. The card service was started in Ahmedabad in 2019.

Key Points:

- This one card will give integrated access to the commuters wherever they travel, whichever public transport they take.
- NCMC will allow passengers with RuPay debit cards, issued in the last 18 months by 23 banks to be swiped for Metro travel.
- This facility will become available on the entire Delhi Metro network by 2022.
- NCMC is an automatic fare collection system. It will turn smartphones into an interoperable transport card that commuters can use to pay for Metro, bus and suburban railways services.

HEALTHCARE

PNEUMOSIL: FIRST PNEUMOCOCCAL CONJUGATE VACCINE



Date: 28th December 2020

Union Health Minister inaugurated India's first pneumococcal conjugate vaccine "Pneumosil".

Key Points:

- It has been developed by the Serum Institute of India Private Limited (SIPL) in collaboration with various other partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- This Indigenous Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine will be available in the market under the brand name "Pneumosil" at an affordable price in a single dose (vial and prefilled syringe) and Multidose (vial) presentations.
- Pneumosil is effective in the prevention of Pneumonia disease.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

PRESIDENT OF INDIA LAID FOUNDATION STONE FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS IN DIU TOWN



Date: 30th December 2020

President of India Ram Nath Kovind visited Diu Town of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu where he laid the foundation stone for various development projects.

Key Points:

- He inaugurated the INS Khukri Memorial and Jalandhar Circuit House in the Diu Town.
- He also inaugurated the 1st academic session of IIIT Vadodara, International Campus Diu and Kamleshwar School, Ghoghla.
- He laid the foundation stone for development projects like construction of a school in Saudwadi in Diu Town, to renovate 1.3 km of heritage walkway on Diu City Wall and to upgrade the fruits and vegetable market at fort road.
- He also laid the foundation stone to develop an integrated municipal solid waste management system for Diu Town.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IMD CENTRE AT LEH IN LADAKH



Date: 30th December 2020

The Union Minister of Science and Technology, Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Centre at Leh in Ladakh.

Key Points:

- The IMD Centre will help to prevent the losses caused due to natural calamities in this region by providing the prior safety indications and will strengthen the weather-related early warning system in Ladakh.
- The centre will be providing a range of weather forecast services, like range from short (3 days) and medium (12 days) to extended (1 month) period.
- The centre will provide weather data to tourist places like Pangong Lake, Nubra, Kargil, Zaskar, Drass and Khalsi.
- The centre will also help to forecast suitable weather conditions for mountaineering, trekking and farming.

ART & CULTURE

‘RAAG-BHOPALI’ EXHIBITION TO PROMOTE ZARI-ZARDOZI



Date: 30th December 2020

The Madhya Pradesh Government is organizing the ‘Raag-Bhopali’ exhibition to promote Zari-Zardozi crafts of Bhopal.

Key Points:

- Embroidery done with metallic threads is called kalabattu and forms the zari.
- The main zari production centres are Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh.
- Here the metal ingots are melted into metal bars called pasa from which lengths are obtained by beating it after treatment.
- This is then pulled through perforated steel plates to make it into wires, followed by the tarkashi process to make it thin with rubber and diamond dies.
- The last stage is called badla where the wire is flattened and twisted with silk or cotton thread to become kasab or kalabattu.

TRANSPORT

100TH KISAN RAIL FLAGGED OFF



Date: 30th December 2020

The Prime Minister flagged off the 100th Kisan Rail train, which shall ply between Devlali and Danapur.

Key Points:

- It has now been extended to run between Sangola to Muzaffarpur.
- The Kisan Rail train carries vegetables and fruits like grapes, oranges, pomegranate, etc.
- The loading and unloading of perishable commodities will be permitted at all en route stoppages and there is no minimum or maximum size of consignment.
- The government has extended a subsidy of 50% on transportation of fruits and vegetables.
- The multi-commodity train service has been popular as it also carries relatively small quantities of produce brought in by small, individual farmers.

ECONOMY

HIGHLIGHTS OF RBI'S WORKING PAPER



Date: 31st December 2020

Recently, a working paper titled “Measuring Trend Inflation in India” was released by RBI.

Key Points:

- The working paper describes that an Inflation rate of 4% is appropriate for India.
- The paper details that there is a steady decline in trend inflation to 4.1-4.3 % since 2014.
- The lower inflation rate will impart deflationary bias to the monetary policy as it will go into overkill relative to what the economy can intrinsically bear in order to achieve the target while the higher rate will render monetary policy too expansionary and will result into prone to inflationary shocks.
- Therefore, it is on the safe side to maintain the inflation target at 4% for the country, as per the authors of the working paper.

INFRASTRUCTURE

FOUNDATION STONE OF LIGHT HOUSE PROJECTS UNDER GHTC-INDIA



Date: 31th December 2020

The Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone of Light House Projects (LHPs) under Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India) at six sites across six States.

Key Points:

- The Light House Projects (LHPs) showcase the best of new-age alternate global technologies, materials and processes in the construction sector for the first time in India at such a large scale.
- They are being constructed under GHTC-India which envisages to provide an ecosystem for adoption of innovative technologies in the housing construction sector in a holistic manner.
- The LHPs are being constructed at Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).
- They comprise about 1000 houses at each location along with allied infrastructure facilities.

DEFENCE

CABINET APPROVES EXPORT OF AKASH MISSILE SYSTEM



Date: 31st December 2020

Recently, Cabinet approved export of Akash Missile System. Under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat, India is growing in its capabilities of manufacturing a wide variety of Defence platforms and missiles.

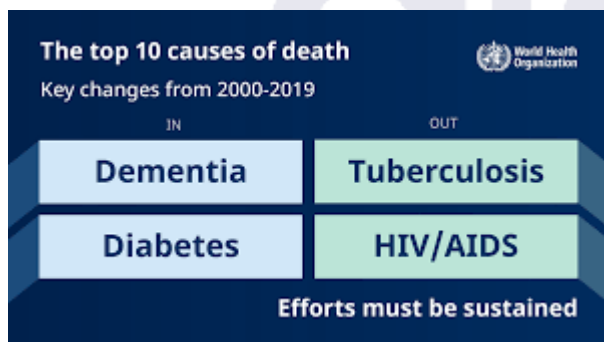
Key Points:

- Akash is the country's important missile with over 96% indigenisation.
- Akash is a Surface to Air Missile with a range of 25 Kms.
- The missile was inducted in 2014 in IAF and in 2015 in Indian Army
- The Government of India intends to focus on exporting high value defence platforms, to achieve a target of 5 Billion USD of defence export and improve strategic relations with friendly foreign countries.
- The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces.

INTERNATIONAL

HEALTHCARE

WHO'S 2019 GLOBAL HEALTH ESTIMATES



Date: 24th December 2020

The WHO's 2019 Global Health Estimates was released recently. The new data cover the period from 2000 to 2019.

Key Points:

- According to the report, non-communicable diseases now make up 7 of the world's top 10 causes of death, an increase from 4 of the 10 leading causes in 2000.
- Heart disease remained the leading cause of death at the global level for the last 20 years. It now represents 16% of total deaths from all causes.
- Diabetes and dementia are also among the world's top 10 causes of death.

- HIV/AIDS dropped from the 8th leading cause of death in 2000 to the 19th in 2019.
- Tuberculosis is also no longer in the global top 10, falling from 7th place in 2000 to 13th in 2019, with a 30% reduction in global deaths.

REPORTS & INDICES

NATURE INDEX 2020 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Date: 27th December 2020

The report on 'Nature Index 2020 Artificial Intelligence' was released by Nature Research which is an International Scientific Publishing Company.

Key Points:

- As per the report, India stood at rank 3rd among 25 countries with most publications on AI technology from 2015-2019. India has published 91,563 AI publications during 2015-2019. The list is topped by China followed by the USA at 2nd position.
- Also, India ranked at 20th position among 25 countries in the category of AI ranked by total article share in the field from 2015-2019. This category of total article share in AI is topped by the USA.
- India's Anna University is ranked at 32nd position in research organisations based on a total number of publications in AI. This category is topped by the Tsinghua University of China.

DEFENCE

PASSEX-2020



Date: 29th December 2020

The Indian Navy and Vietnam People's Navy held PASSEX-2020 (Passage Exercise).

Key Points:

- The PASSEX-2020 was held in the South China Sea with an aim to improve maritime cooperation between both nations.
- As a part of this exercise, INS Kiltan reached NhaRong Port, Ho Chi Minh City under Mission Sagar- III with 15 tonnes of HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) stores to help the flood-affected people of central Vietnam.
- Thus Indian Navy was represented by INS Kiltan which is the part of HADR assistance from India to friendly foreign nations during this pandemic state.

REPORTS & INDICES

12TH WORLD ECONOMIC LEAGUE TABLE 2021 REPORT



Date: 29th December 2020

The Centre for Economics and Business Research Ltd (CEBR) has released the 12th World Economic League Table 2021.

Key Points:

- As per the report, India stood at the rank of 6th largest economy among 195 countries in 2020 from 5th rank position in 2019.
- The ranking is topped by the United States.
- The second and third rank positions are marked by China and Japan respectively.
- As per the report, India will become the 5th largest economy by 2025 and 3rd largest economy by 2030.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA AND BHUTAN SIGNED MOU



Date: 31st December 2020

India and Bhutan have signed MoU to have cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Key Points:

- The MoU will allow India and Bhutan to enhance their cooperation in areas like remote sensing of the earth, satellite communication and satellite-based navigation, Space science, planetary exploration, use of spacecraft and space systems and ground system and application of space technology.
- Also, both nations decided to set up a Joint Working Group which will frame an action plan to enhance space cooperation and enhance this MoU's purpose.
- The signed MoU will provide Impetus to explore cooperation possibilities in the field of remote sensing of the earth; satellite communication; satellite navigation; space science and exploration of outer space.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

BBX11: A GENE THAT FACILITATES IN THE GREENING OF PLANTS



Date: 31st December 2020

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) have identified a gene that facilitates in the greening of plants.

Key Points:

- This gene plays a crucial role in regulating the levels of protochlorophyllide which is an intermediate in the biosynthesis of the green pigment chlorophyll.
- IISER scientists have identified the gene 'BBX11'.
- The study was recently published in the British journal New Phytologist.



disha
Nurturing Ambitions

PEOPLE

NATIONAL

APPOINTMENTS

VINEET AGRAWAL



Date: 24th December 2020

Why in news: Appointed as the president of ASSOCHAM.

Key Points:

- Vineet Agrawal has been appointed as President of ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India).
- He has replaced Niranjana Hiranandani.
- Vineet Agrawal is the Managing Director of logistics major Transport Corporation of India Limited.
- Apart from this, Sumant Sinha has been appointed as Vice-President of ASSOCHAM.

OBITUARY

SUGATHAKUMARI



Date: 25th December 2020

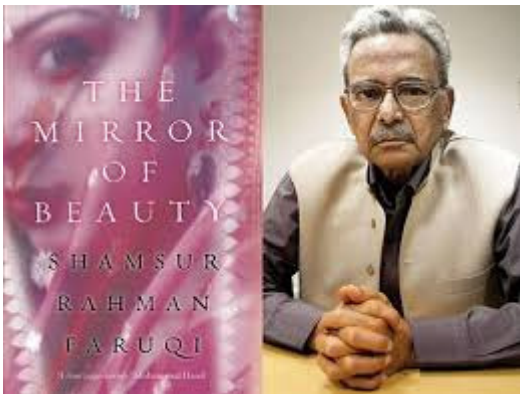
Eminent Malayalam poet, conservationist and women's activist, Sugathakumari passed away at the age of 86.

Key Points:

- Sugathakumari was an Indian poet and activist, who was at the forefront of environmental and feminist movements in Kerala.
- In the late 1970s she led a successful nationwide movement, known as Save Silent Valley, to save the Silent Valley in Kerala.
- Her poem “Marathinu Stuthi” (Ode to a Tree) became a symbol for the protest and reverberated in all the Save the Silent Valley campaigns.
- Sugathakumari was also the first chairperson of the Kerala State Women Commission.
- She was a recipient of Padma Shri (2006), Kerala Sahitya Akademi award, Kendra Sahitya Akademi award among others.

OBITUARY

SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI



Date: 26th December 2020

Legendary Urdu poet and critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi passed away. He was 85.

Key Points:

- Shamsur Rahman Faruqi was an Indian poet and an Urdu critic and theorist.
- Dastangoi is a 16th-century Urdu oral storytelling art form. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has played a significant role in its revival in the 21st century.
- His greatest feat, perhaps, was his mammoth novel Kai Chaand The Sar-e-aasman (The Mirror of Beauty), a work that he began writing at the age of 70.
- He was awarded the Saraswati Samman in 1996 and Padma Shri in 2009.

APPOINTMENTS

DR HARSH VARDHAN



Date: 31st December 2020

Why in news: Nominated as the board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI).

Key Points:

- The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan was recently nominated as the board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI).
- He will succeed Myint Htwe, who is the Union Minister of Health and Sports of Myanmar.
- The term of the minister as a member in the GAVI board will be between 2021 and 2023.
- The Minister is to represent the South East Area Regional Office/Western Pacific Regional Office in the GAVI board. Currently, the seat is held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar.

FLORIN CITU



Date: 26th December 2020

Why in news: He is appointed as Prime Minister of Romania.

Key Points:

- Florin Citu, former investment banker and Finance Minister, of the ruling National Liberal Party (NLP) became the new Prime Minister of Romania.
- He defeated the opposition Socialist Democratic Party (PSD) by getting the support of 260 lawmakers out of 465 seats in the assembly.
- Florin Citu earlier served as the economist for the European Investment Bank and Central Bank of New Zealand.



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ISSUES

NATIONAL

BANKING & FINANCE

BEWARE OF ILLEGAL DIGITAL LENDING APPS: RBI



Date: 24th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- RBI has released an advisory on digital lending apps.
- The advisory comes in the backdrop of at least three borrowers in Telangana committing suicide in the recent past, following alleged harassment by personnel of such lenders, and many more complaining of being subjected to coercive methods after defaulting on repayments.
- According to the advisory, the public should be wary of unauthorised digital lending platforms and mobile apps.
- Public should verify antecedents of the company/ firm offering loans online or through mobile apps.
- Consumers should never share copies of KYC documents with unidentified persons or unverified/unauthorised apps.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

FIVE MONTH OLD INFANT MOVES HIGH COURT SEEKING BAN ON VEHICULAR MOVEMENT INSIDE CUBBON PARK



Date: 26th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- The Karnataka High Court has issued notice to the state government and other respondents on a public interest litigation filed by a five-month-old infant, seeking to ban traffic movement within and through Cubbon park, in Bengaluru.
- The petitioner argues that allowing vehicle movement inside the park has a direct impact on the health, wellbeing and quality of life of the Petitioner, who as an infant is made to bear the burden of the environmentally irresponsible Respondents.
- It also impinges on the rights of the petitioner to enjoy pollution free air and water and endangers and impairs his quality of life and is a clear derogation of his constitutional rights.

DEFENCE

SHAHEEN-IX



Date: 24th December 2020

Shaheen-IX is a joint air exercise between China and Pakistan.

Key points:

- China defended the “Shaheen-IX” exercise with Pakistan air force as a routine arrangement, which experts believe is reflective of a larger strategic posture towards India.
- It is being held in Pakistan’s southern Sindh province near Indian border.
- India recently hosted the Malabar 2020 naval exercise with the U.S., Japan and Australia which was termed by a Chinese state media as an ill-intentioned attempt to corner China.

HEALTHCARE

CORONAVIRUS VARIANT CIRCULATING IN THE UK

15:00	14:54	Porto	EZS 1554	
15:05		Bournemouth	LX 4597	
15:05	14:50	Lisbon	EZS 6395	CANCELLED
15:20		London LGW	TP 6759	
15:25	15:08	Porto	EZS 8472	CANCELLED
15:45		London LHR	EZS 1452	
15:55		Casablanca	BA 732	CANCELLED
16:20		Nantes	AT 930	
16:20			EZS 1364	

Date: 26th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- The coronavirus variant circulating in the UK is defined by many mutations.
- A mutation means an alteration in genetic material. In an RNA virus such as SARS-CoV-2, proteins are made of a sequence of amino acids.
- Such a virus contains some 30,000 ‘base pairs’, which are like bricks placed next to each other to form a structure. An alteration in this base can be a mutation, effectively changing the shape and behaviour of the virus.
- In the UK variant, one mutation has made the virus more likely to bind with human proteins called receptors. This is called N501Y.
- The mutated virus reportedly accounts for 60% of recent infections in London.

ENVIRONMENT

ANTARCTIC ICEBERG A68 BECOMES CAUSE FOR CONCERN FOR SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND



Date: 28th December 2020

Key Highlights:

- The giant Antarctic iceberg A68 has become a cause for concern for South Georgia Island.

- The giant iceberg A68, the biggest block of free-floating ice from Antarctica with an area of about 5,800 sq. km, has been drifting in the Atlantic Ocean since 2017.
- In 2020, due to an ocean current, the iceberg was propelled into the South Atlantic Ocean and since then it has been drifting towards the remote sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia, which is a British Overseas Territory (BOT).
- This has prompted fears about the impact the iceberg could have on the island's abundant wildlife.
- Recently, US National Ice Center (USNIC) confirmed that two new icebergs calved from A68a were large enough to be named and tracked. They are called A68E and A68F.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TURKEY'S CONTROVERSIAL LAW TO TIGHTEN MONITORING OF CIVIL SOCIETY



Date: 31st December 2020

Key Highlights:

- The Turkish parliament passed a bill called “Preventing Financing of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction”. It would increase the monitoring of civil society groups.
- The Bill was passed following the 2019 report on Turkey prepared by the intergovernmental body Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meant to fight money laundering and terror financing.
- The Bill is meant to keep Turkey from being blacklisted by the Paris-based watchdog of terror financing.
- The Bill gives the Turkish government the power to appoint trustees to NGOs, to suspend their activities, seize their assets and monitor their sources of funding.
- Critics believe that it violates the provisions under the Turkish constitution since it interferes with the right to freedom of association.



Date: 28th December 2020

Key Features:

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information System (INCOIS) has developed a Digital Ocean app and a platform (www.do.incois.gov.in).
- The Digital Ocean app and platform is basically a set of applications which helps to organise and present heterogeneous oceanographic data by adopting geospatial technology.
- It was launched by Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan.
- It is proved to be the first of its kind platform for ocean data management purposes.
- It is a one-stop solution to the data related to the ocean. The data from this platform and app will prove beneficial to various research institutes, operational agencies in the ocean sector, strategic users, policymakers, maritime industries and to academic institutions.

ECONOMY

ZERO COUPON BONDS TO RECAPITALISE PUNJAB & SIND BANK



Date: 29th December 2020

Key Features:

- The government has used financial innovation of zero coupon bonds to recapitalise Punjab & Sind Bank by issuing the lender Rs 5,500-crore worth of non-interest bearing bonds.
- These are special types of zero coupon bonds issued by the government after proper due diligence and these are issued at par.
- These bonds are not tradable. The lender has kept them in the Held-To-Maturity (HTM) bucket, not requiring it to book any mark-to-market gains or losses from these bonds.
- Though these will earn no interest for the subscriber, market participants term it both a 'financial illusion' and 'great innovation' by the government where it is using Rs 100 to create an impact of Rs 200 in the economy.
- These bonds have a maturity of 10-15 years and issued specifically to Punjab & Sind Bank.

BANKING & FINANCE

‘UNICAS’—WORLD’S FIRST CRYPTO BANK



Date: 31st December 2020

Key Features:

- The World’s First Crypto Bank named as ‘Unicas’ was launched by Cashaa of the United Kingdom in partnership with United Multistate Credit Co-operative Society Ltd of India.
- The ‘Unicas’ will help people to perform transactions in cryptocurrency and fiat from one account to the other. The bank will offer services for crypto as well as fiat assets.
- The UK based Cashaa will access regulatory license, physical branches and banking infrastructure of United Multistate Credit Co-operative Society Ltd of India.
- This will be the first time in India that a finance organisation is enabled for cryptocurrency. Also, World’s first Crypto bank is initiated in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
- It will offer regular banking services like saving accounts, crypto exchange, crypto loan and debit card to transact crypto.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

US'S PLAN TO HAVE NUCLEAR REACTOR ON MOON



Date: 29th December 2020

Key Features:

- USA's plan to have the first nuclear reactor on the moon by the end of 2026 got a new push with a recent White House directive.
- NASA aims to establish a flight hardware system that is ready for integrating with the lunar lander by 2026-end.
- The fission power system — as the nuclear reactor is called — will benefit future robotic and human exploration missions to the moon as well as Mars.
- The availability of safe, efficient, and readily available power is critical to these missions and a fission surface power system meets those requirements.
- The fission surface power system will be fully manufactured and assembled on earth and integrated on a lander as a payload.
- The system will be designed to operate for up to 10 years.



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