

Week 2 Current Affairs Update

8th - 14th February 2021

EVENTS

NATIONAL

DEFENCE

‘MADE IN INDIA’ MK-III ADVANCED LIGHT HELICOPTERS (ALH)



Date: 8th February 2021

The Indian Navy received three “made in India” Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) from the state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). The helicopters are customised for coastal security.

Key Points:

- The naval version of ALH is fitted with an array of advanced sensors that can detect Mumbai terror attacks like intrusions on Indian waters.
- These helicopters have the latest-generation avionics, indigenous low-frequency dunking sonar, a full glass cockpit with an integrated architecture display system, and powerful Shakti engines.
- It also has a nose-mounted surveillance radar with 270-degree coverage that can detect and track multiple marine targets.
- Its synthetic aperture radar and inverse synthetic aperture radar can detect targets on the sea.

TRANSPORT

GUIDELINES FOR FLOATING STRUCTURES ISSUED



Date: 8th February 2021

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways has issued the guidelines for floating structures with a vision to set up world-class floating infrastructure all along the coastline in the upcoming projects.

Key Points:

- The guidelines set out technical aspects for implementation of Floating Jetties or Platforms for Marinas, Minor Harbors, Fishing Harbours, etc. in coastal areas, estuaries, waterways, rivers, and reservoirs.
- These guidelines may also be suitably utilized for floating platforms in various waterborne systems.
- The benefits of floating jetties include their cost-effectiveness, faster implementation, easily expandable, and have minimal environmental impacts.

BANKING & FINANCE

RBI TO GIVE SMALL INVESTORS DIRECT ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SECURITIES



Date: 8th February 2021

The RBI has informed that it will give small investors direct access to its government securities (G-sec) trading platform.

Key Points:

- Retail investors can directly open their gilt accounts with RBI, and trade in government securities.
- It is being described as a major structural reform.

- The two key categories are:
- treasury bills – short-term instruments that mature in 91 days, 182 days, or 364 days, and
- dated securities – long-term instruments, which mature anywhere between 5 years and 40 years.
- A “Gilt Account” means an account opened and maintained for holding Government securities, by an entity or a person including a person resident outside India’ with a “Custodian” permitted by the RBI.
- G-secs are debt instruments issued by the government to borrow money.

INFRASTRUCTURE

ASOM MALA PROGRAMME



Date: 9th February 2021

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the ‘Asom Mala’ programme in Dhekiajuli of Sonitpur district of Assam.

Key Points:

- The programme is launched to boost the road infrastructure and enhance the economic progress of the state.
- The Asom Mala Programme will focus on maintenance by conducting field studies of the roads and will thus improve the Road Asset Management System of the state.
- During the launch of the programme, PM Modi also laid the foundation stone to set up medical colleges and hospitals in Biswanath and Charaideo.
- The medical colleges will be set up with an allocation of funds of Rs 1100 crores.
- The hospitals will be having bed capacity of 500 and 100 MBBS doctors allotment capacity.

INFRASTRUCTURE

DOBHI – DURGAPUR NATURAL GAS PIPELINE



Date: 9th February 2021

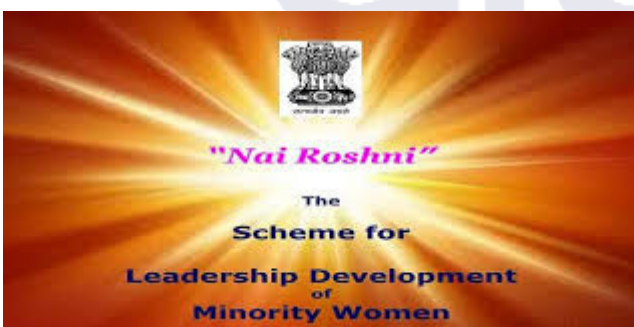
Prime Minister recently dedicated to the nation the LPG import terminal, 348 km Dobhi – Durgapur Natural Gas Pipeline section. The section is part of the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project.

Key Points:

- Foundation stone was also laid for the second Catalytic-Isodewaxing unit of Haldia Refinery.
- These projects will also help Haldia to grow into a major hub of export-import.
- The Pipeline will benefit West Bengal and 10 districts of Bihar and Jharkhand.
- This second Catalytic Dewaxing Unit will reduce our dependence on import with regard to lube-based oils.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

NAI ROSHNI: A SCHEME FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF MINORITY WOMEN



Date: 10th February 2021

“Nai Roshni”, a scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women is being implemented across India by the Ministry of Minority affairs.

Key Points:

- The scheme aims to empower and instill confidence in women by providing knowledge, tools, and techniques for interacting with Government systems, banks, and other institutions at all levels.

- This includes empowerment of the trainee women so that they become independent and confident members of society.
- The scheme provides for a six days training programme followed by handholding for one year.
- The training covers issues relating to women viz. The leadership of Women through participation in decision making, Educational Programmes for women, Health and Hygiene, Legal rights of women, Financial Literacy, Digital Literacy, Swachh Bharat, Life Skills, and Advocacy for Social and Behavioural change.
- The Scheme is being implemented through NGOs enrolled under the Nai Roshni Scheme.

DEFENCE

TROPEX-21



Date: 12th February 2021

The Indian Navy's largest war game named TROPEX 2021 held in the Indian Ocean.

Key Points:

- The significance of TROPEX is Theatre level Operational Readiness Exercise.
- The exercise aims to observe the operational units of the Indian Navy, Indian Army, Coast Guard, and Indian Air Force.
- The TROPEX 21 is expected to end by the third week of Feb 2021.
- The exercise aims to maintain the theme of 'Combat Ready, Credible and Cohesive Force'.
- The exercise is being supervised by Naval Headquarters with the involvement of all three commands of India Navy, and tri-services command headquartered at Port Blair.
- The TROPEX exercise is conducted in three distinct phases.
- The three phases are: (1) 'Sea Vigil' Coastal Defence Exercise (2) AMPHEX-21 Tri-Service Joint Amphibious Exercise (3) Weapon Workup of TROPEX.

AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL HORTICULTURE FAIR 2021



Date: 11th February 2021

The National Horticulture Fair 2021 organised in Bengaluru by the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research (IIHR).

Key Points:

- The theme for the National Horticulture Fair 2021: 'Horticulture for Start-Up and Stand-Up India'.
- This time, the fair is conducted in hybrid mode, that is the participants can participate in online as well as the offline manner.
- The motto of this fair is to boost the income of farmers by transforming horticulture into a business enterprise.
- In the fair, the demonstration and discussions about Cutting edge technologies, crop varieties, pest and disease management practices, and processing methods are being held.
- Also, around 140 stalls related to horticultural crops, seeds, and technologies are installed to promote horticulture.

ECONOMY

‘SWAVALAMBAN SASHAKT-MEGA CAMPAIGN’



Date: 12th February 2021

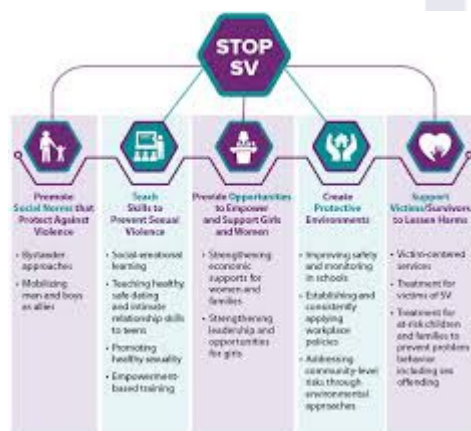
The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) in partnership with Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of India (COWE) has launched 'Swavalamban Sashakt- Mega Campaign'.

Key Points:

- It is launched to create awareness about the Stand Up India (SUI) Scheme of the Central Government.
- SUI is a flagship program launched by PM Modi which offers loan facility of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore to at least one Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) borrower and at least one women borrower per bank branch for setting up a greenfield enterprise in sectors like manufacturing, services or the trading.
- The 'Swavalamban Sashakt- Mega Campaign' will deliver the 20 webinar series which will promote the importance of SUI Scheme.
- The webinar series will be held on every Wednesday at 3 pm.
- The webinar will allow stakeholders from various sectors to interact with each other and with the experts.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

SKILL TRAINING ON GENDER SENSITISATION



Date: 10th February 2021

Recently, the Union Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launched the "Skill training on Gender Sensitisation and Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) at the workplace".

Key Points:

- This was launched in partnership with Management and Entrepreneurship and Professional Skill Council (MEPSC) as the Implementation Agency for the project.
- It is a six-month project.
- It will be implemented in 15 districts across 3 states of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab to train 1800 trainees and 240 training professionals.

AGRICULTURE

REWARD PROJECT



Date: 12th February 2021

The Odisha government has approved to implement REWARD Project.

Key Points:

- Rejuvenating Watershed for Agricultural Resilience through Innovative Development (REWARD) is a Government of India initiated and World Bank supported multiState project.
- The total sanctioned amount for this project is Rs 500 crore.
- Out of the total sanctioned amount, Rs 350 crore will be provided by the World Bank and the rest amount will be provided by the state government.
- The REWARD Project aims to use a scientific and technical approach for watershed management for a period of 6 years, which will commence from April 2021.
- The project will provide a sustained impact on watershed management in the state.
- The REWARD Project will improve land and water conservation in the selected watershed areas.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

DEFENCE MINISTER INAUGURATED 57000 WATER STRUCTURES IN MP



Date: 13th February 2021

The Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh virtually inaugurated more than 57,000 water structures in Madhya Pradesh.

Key Points:

- The water structures were inaugurated under the 'Jalabhishekam Campaign'.
- The water structures were inaugurated with an aim to conserve water and to have a water management strategy.
- The 57000 water structures are built at a cost of Rs 2,000 crores.
- They are inaugurated under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Irrigation Scheme.
- The 'Jalabhishekam Campaign' aims to conserve the water and make MP a self-reliant state.
- The campaign will fulfil the motto of providing water to every farm and will work for every hand, thus to support villages of the state.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021



Date: 12th February 2021

Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill 2021 was passed recently in the Lok Sabha.

Key Points:

- The Bill seeks to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.
- It contains provisions to deal with domestic and international arbitration.
- It defines the law for conducting conciliation proceedings.
- It specifies that a stay on the arbitral award can be provided if the court is satisfied that the relevant arbitration agreement was induced by fraud or corruption.
- This change will be effective from October 23, 2015.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

SAKSHAM (Shramik Shakti Manch)



Date: 12th February 2021

Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) has launched SAKSHAM (Shramik Shakti Manch).

Key Points:

- It is a job portal for mapping the skills of Shramiks with regard to requirements of MSMEs.
- Its objective is to directly connect Shramiks with MSMEs and facilitate their placement.
- The portal will help eliminate labour contractors.
- It shall help identification of skill proficiency level and development of Skill Cards for Shramiks.
- The portal uses algorithm and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for the availability of Shramiks.
- The portal was initially launched in two districts and is now being launched as an all India portal.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

MEGHALAYA POLICE SIGNED MOU WITH SBI



Date: 13th February 2021

The Meghalaya state's Police signed MoU with State Bank of India.

Key Points:

- They have entered into MoU to implement the e-challan in the jurisdiction of the Shillong Traffic Police (STP).
- The e-challan system will be a digital traffic enforcement solution which will be used to impose penalties on violators of traffic rules and to generate challan in a digital manner.
- The e-challan system is integrated with VAHAN & SARATHI applications, which will enable Traffic Officials to fetch the details of the traffic violator.
- The integration with VAHAN & SARATHI applications will provide vehicle and driver details, who have not to abide by the traffic rules.
- The violators of the traffic rules can pay a fine amount using instant card payments by swiping PoS machines or by producing e-challan at traffic units.

AGRICULTURE

GOI, CHHATTISGARH GOV. AND WORLD BANK SIGNED \$100 MILLION PROJECT



Date: 14th February 2021

The Government of India, Chhattisgarh Government and the World Bank signed \$100 million projects.

Key Points:

- They have signed the amount for the project called CHIRAAG (Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth).
- The project aims to develop a sustainable production system which will help the tribal community of the state to produce nutritious food.
- The CHIRAAG project will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region of the state, as this region is having a large population of poor and undernourished people.
- So, this project in such a region will help the community to produce as well as consume nutritious food which will also improve their health and economic lifestyle.
- The CHIRAAG project will prove beneficial to 180,000 households of 1000 villages of 8 districts of the state.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP (MGNF) PROGRAMME



Date: 15th February 2021

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) partnered with nine Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) across India to launch Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) programme.

Key Points:

- The fellowship programme was rolled out during the event of 'Transforming skilling through strategic partnerships under SANKALP'.
- The MGNF programme is government-funded and is having a period of 2 years.
- The programme is launched under SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion), which is a loan assisted by the World Bank.
- The fellowship programme will impart on-ground practical experience to the beneficiaries.
- The beneficiaries will be provided with academic expertise and technical solutions which will develop their skills and will help them to manage the skill development planning at the district level.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FIRST INDIA-EUROPEAN UNION HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE



Date: 8th February 2021

The first High-Level Dialogue between India and the European Union was held.

Key Points:

- The Indian delegation was represented by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal.
- And the EU's delegation was represented by European Union Executive Vice-President & Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis.
- The dialogue was meant to follow the commitment which was made by both India and EU at the 15th India-EU Leaders' Summit held in July 2020.
- They held the discussion to strengthen the bilateral trade and investment through partnerships in various domains.
- They also assured to conduct India-EU Multilateral Dialogue in order to boost trade & investment cooperation between them.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SRI LANKA – INDIA CURRENCY SWAP FACILITY



Date: 9th February 2021

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) settled a \$400 million currency swap facility from the RBI. The two countries had agreed upon meeting the terms.

Key Points:

- The CBSL obtained the swap facility on July 31, 2020, for an initial period of three months, to cope with the severe economic impact of the pandemic.
- Subsequently, the RBI provided a three-month rollover at CBSL's request, until February 1, 2021.
- A further extension would require Sri Lanka to have a successfully negotiated staff-level agreement for an IMF programme, which Sri Lanka does not have at present.
- Currency swap agreements involve trade in local currencies, where countries pay for imports and exports at predetermined rates of exchange without the involvement of a third country currency like the US dollar.
- It reduces the risk of volatility against the third currency and does away with the charges involved in multiple currency exchanges.

SPACE

UAE'S HOPE MISSION



Date: 9th February 2021

The UAE's first mission to Mars entered its orbit, seven months after the UAE's 'Hope Probe' was launched from Tanegashima in Japan.

Key Points:

- With this, the UAE has become the fifth country after the US, Russia, China, the EU, and India, to reach the Martian orbit.
- The unmanned spacecraft is called 'Al-Amal' — the Arabic word for hope.
- The historic event was timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the unification of the UAE's seven emirates.
- Hope is the UAE's fourth space mission and first interplanetary one.
- The previous three were all Earth-observation satellites.
- Its overall mission life is one Martian year, which is about 687 days on Earth.

DEFENCE

16TH YUDH ABHYAS



Date: 9th February 2021

The 16th 'Yudh Abhyas', joint military exercise of India and the United States commenced in Rajasthan.

Key Points:

- The Indo-US joint military exercise is being held at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges of Bikaner district of Rajasthan.
- Around 250 military soldiers from both nations will be participating in the exercise.
- The Yudh Abhyas Indo-US military exercise will help to strengthen the defence relations of both nations.
- The Indian side is represented by: BMP-II Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicles.
- The US side is represented by: Indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter WSIRUDRA, MI-17, Chinooks, Stryker Vehicles.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN SIGNED MOU TO CONSTRUCT SHAHTOOT DAM



Date: 10th February 2021

India and Afghanistan signed MoU to construct Shahtoot Dam (Lalandar Dam).

Key Points:

- The MoU was signed by Union Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and his counterpart Hanif Atmar.
- The Shahtoot Dam will be constructed on a tributary of the Kabul River in Afghanistan.
- The MoU is the part of New Development Partnership between both nations.
- The total cost of the project is \$300 million.
- The Shahtoot Dam will prove beneficial in providing drinking water to around 2 million people of Kabul.
- It will support an irrigation facility to the nearby regions.

ENVIRONMENT

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2021



Date: 11th February 2021

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the 20th edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit 2021.

Key Points:

- The theme for the summit: 'Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all'.
- The summit is organised by The Energy and Resources Institute's (TERI).
- PM Modi highlighted the importance of such a global event for the present and future economy. He mentioned that the health of the community and health of the planet are the two major pillars which will lead to the progress journey of the economy.
- He discussed climate change and mentioned that the way to tackle this is only through Climate Justice.
- Climate justice can only emerge from the large-hearted approach.
- The key partners of the summit are the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

ENVIRONMENTS

WORLD'S SMALLEST REPTILE DISCOVERED IN MADAGASCAR



Date: 11th February 2021

A chameleon discovered in Madagascar by scientists from Germany and Madagascar may be the world's smallest adult reptile.

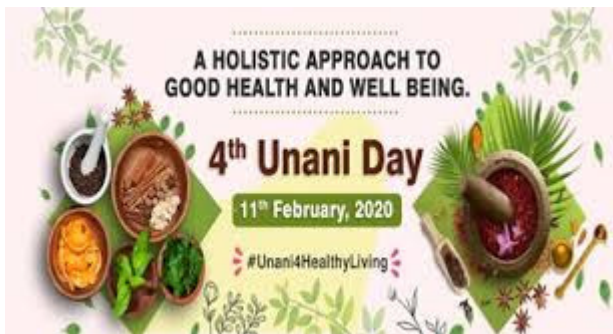
The discovery has been reported in the journal Scientific Reports.

Key Points:

- The team found one male and one female of the species, named *Brookesia nana*, during an expedition in 2012.
- The male has a length (snout to vent) of 13.5 mm and a total length of 21.6 mm when the tail is included.
- Previously, the chameleon species *Brookesia Micra* was thought to be the smallest.
- The longest, the reticulated python, at 6.25 m is almost as long as 289 *Brookesia nanas*.
- Madagascar is home to tiny lizards and also the smallest species of snakes.
- One possible reason for such small species is the so-called “island effect” that causes species on small islands to get smaller.

HEALTHCARE

WORLD UNANI DAY



Date: 11th February 2021

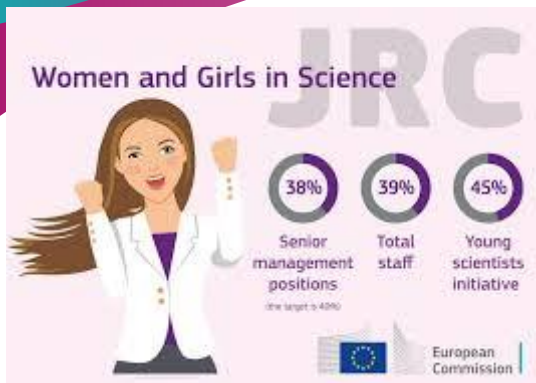
World Unani Day was celebrated on February 11, 2021 to spread awareness about health care delivery through the Unani system of medicine through its preventive and curative philosophy.

Key Points:

- World Unani Day is celebrated every year to mark the birth anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan.
- Principles of Unani System: It postulates the presence of four humor in the body: dam (blood), balgham (phlegm), safra (yellow bile) and sauda (black bile).
- The quality and quantity of four humor affect the state of health and disease in the body.
- It originated in Greece. In India, it was introduced by Arabs and Persians sometime around the 11th century.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN & YOUNG GIRLS IN SCIENCE



Date: 11th February 2021

International Day of Women & Young Girls in Science was recently celebrated by launching an online campaign.

Key Points:

- The campaign was launched by the Ministry of Women & Child Development in association with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Electronics and Information technology
- Its objective is to: (1) To celebrate women who have carved a niche for themselves in the field of STEM; (2) To encourage young girls who aspire to excel in STEM and contribute towards nation building; (3) To promote full and equal access to participation in science for women and girls
- It is observed after the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on 22 December 2015.
- The day recognises the critical role women and girls play in science and technology.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

EXIM BANK TO GRANT USD 400 MILLION TO MALDIVES



Date: 13th February 2021

The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will provide financial assistance to the Maldives to fund Greater Male Connectivity Project.

Key Points:

- In this regard, the Exim Bank will be providing USD 400 million to the island nation.
- The announcement for the same was made by the Reserve Bank of India.
- The financial assistance will be provided through Line of Credit (LoC), which will be effective from 28th Jan 2021.
- The terminal utilisation period is 60 months after the scheduled completion date of the project.
- About Greater Male Connectivity Project: It is a 6.7 km largest civilian infrastructure project. The project will offer connectivity of Male with neighbouring islands like Villingili, Gulhifahu and Thilafushi.
- GOI will provide funds for this project in the Maldives through a USD 400 million lines of credit and USD 100 million grant.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA-AUSTRALIA CIRCULAR ECONOMY (I-ACE) HACKATHON, 2021



Date: 12th February 2021

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and Australia's national science agency (CSIRO) kick started the India-Australia Circular Economy (I-ACE) Hackathon, 2021.

Key Points:

- Its goal is to enable talented innovative students and start-ups from Australia and India to address common national issues through innovative technology solutions.
- Key themes for the hackathon:
 - Innovation in packaging reducing packaging waste
 - Innovation in food supply chains avoiding waste
 - Creating opportunities for plastic waste reduction
 - Recycling critical energy metals and e-waste
- A 'circular economy' model employs waste management and focuses on reusing, recycling and responsible manufacture.
- It can support the development of new industries and jobs, reducing emissions and increasing efficient use of natural resources.

ONE OF THE STRONGEST FLARES REPORTED FROM A SUPERMASSIVE BLACK HOLE, BL LACERTAE



Date: 14th February 2021

Indian Astronomers have reported one of the strongest flares from a supermassive black hole called BL Lacertae.

Key Points:

- Feeding supermassive black holes have complicated emission mechanisms.
- They emit jets of charged particles traveling nearly at the speed of light.
- They are one of the most luminous and energetic objects in the Universe.
- BL Lacertae blazar is 10 million light-years away.
- It can be observed with the help of a relatively small telescope.
- The whole Earth Blazar Telescope (WEBT) had predicted the flares.
- Significance: (1) It can help trace the mass of the black hole and the source of this emission; (2) It can provide a lead to probe into mysteries and trace events at different stages of evolution of the Universe.

Environment

Bihar signed MoU with UNEP



Date: 15th February 2021

The Government of Bihar signed MoU with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Key Points:

- The MoU was signed to have climate resilience and low carbon development in Bihar by 2040.
- With this, Bihar has become the first Indian state to enter into such an agreement.
- The UNEP will assist the Bihar State Pollution Control Board (BSPCB).
- UNEP will offer support for: Preparation of Greenhouse Gas Inventory and analysis of carbon footprint, developing climate impact vulnerability assessments, increasing technical expertise in BSPCB to tackle climate issues.
- The UNEP will also analyse the state's action plan on climate change which will help to coordinate India's action plan on climate change as per the Paris Agreement.



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Nurturing Ambitions

PEOPLE

NATIONAL

OBITUARY

AKHTAR ALI



Date: 8th February 2021

Akhtar Ali, a former Davis Cup coach and a legendary figure in Indian tennis, passed away.

Key Points:

- Akhtar, father of India's current Davis Cup coach Zeeshan Ali, was 83.
- He represented India in eight Davis Cup ties against Pakistan, Malaysia, Iran, Mexico, Japan and Monaco between 1958 and 1964.
- He played alongside stalwarts like Ramanathan Krishnan, Naresh Kumar, Premjit Lall and Jaidip Mukerjea.
- He was the coach of the Indian national tennis team from 1966 till 1993, and had guided India to two Davis Cup finals (1966 and 1974).
- He was conferred the Arjuna Award in 2000 for lifetime contribution to tennis.

AWARDS & HONOURS

MANASA VARANASI



Date: 13th February 2021

Why in news: wins the Femina Miss India World 2020.

Key Points:

- Manasa Varanasi, an engineer from Telangana, emerged as the winner of Femina Miss India World 2020.
- Miss India 2019, Suman Ratan Singh Rao from Rajasthan crowned her successor.
- Haryana's Manika Sheokand was declared Femina Miss Grand India 2020 while Uttar Pradesh's Manya Singh crowned Femina Miss India 2020 Runner Up.
- Manasa Varanasi is a financial information exchange analyst and will represent India at the 70th Miss World pageant in December 2021.

INTERNATIONAL

AWARDS & HONOURS

ROBERT IRWIN



Date: 12th February 2021

Why in news: Wins the Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award.

Key Points:

- Australia Zoo's Robert Irwin has won the Natural History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award.
- Robert won the award for the image titled 'bushfire', which is the picture of the devastating Australian Bushfire in 2020, he captured using a drone, near the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in Cape York, Queensland.
- Irwin has won the Natural History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award for a striking bird's-eye-view image capturing the devastating bushfires that tore through Australia 12 months ago.
- The image shows a line of fire burning in between the bushes, dividing it into parts.

APPOINTMENTS

MARIO DRAGHI



Date: 14th February 2021

Why in news: Sworn in as Italy's new Prime Minister. He has replaced Giuseppe Conte.

Key Points:

- Former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi known as "Super Mario" was formally sworn in as Italy's new Prime Minister.
- Mario Draghi is an Italian economist who previously served as President of the European Central Bank from 2011 until 2019.
- He presided over the institution throughout the Eurozone crisis, and became famous throughout Europe for saying that he would be prepared to do "whatever it takes" to prevent the Euro from failing.
- Draghi was also the Chair of the Financial Stability Board from 2009 to 2011 and Governor of the Bank of Italy from 2005 to 2011.

KARIM KHAN



Date: 13th February 2021

Why in news: Appointed as chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Key Points:

- A British lawyer, Karim Khan, has been elected as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. He will replace Fatou Bensouda.
- He will be the third prosecutor in the history of ICC.
- He is best known for heading the United Nations' special investigative team looking into Islamic State crimes in Iraq.
- Earlier, the United States, China and Russia have refused to recognize the jurisdiction of ICC. India is not a member of ICC.



ISSUES

NATIONAL

ENVIRONMENT

UTTARAKHAND GLACIER DISASTER



Date: 9th February 2021

Key Highlights:

- In a staggering collapse of part of a glacier in Uttarakhand's Nanda Devi mountain and the ensuing floods many lives have been lost.
- More than 200 people went missing after flash floods in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. So far, 20 bodies have been recovered.
- The flash floods were caused by a glacier burst in the upper reaches of the Himalayas.
- The resulting avalanche and deluge in the Alaknanda river system (Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers in Chamoli district) washed away a hydroelectric station (Tapovan power project) and five bridges (that connected nearby villages).
- The remoteness of where this happened means no-one has a definitive answer for what caused the flood.
- Experts say one possibility is that massive ice blocks broke off the glacier due to a temperature rise, releasing a huge amount of water.

BANKING & FINANCE

PRIVATISATION OF BANKS



Date: 10th February 2021

Key Highlights:

- In the Union Budget for 2021-22, the government has announced taking up the privatisation of two public sector banks (in addition to IDBI Bank) and one general insurance company in the upcoming fiscal.
- PSU banks are under dual control, with the RBI supervising the banking operations and the Finance Ministry handling ownership issues.
- Many committees had proposed bringing down the government stake in public banks below 51% — the Narasimham Committee proposed 33% and the P J Nayak Committee suggested below 50%.
- Currently, there are twelve nationalised banks in India.
- The two banks that will now be privatised will be selected through a process in which NITI Aayog will make recommendations, which will be considered by a core group of secretaries on disinvestment and then the Alternative Mechanism (or Group of Ministers).

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

CRYPTOCURRENCIES AND ITS REGULATION



Date: 13th February 2021

Key Highlights:

- Government has proposed bringing in a law on cryptocurrencies so as to put an end to the existing ambiguity over the legality of these currencies in India.
- The government has, from time to time, suggested that it does not consider

cryptocurrencies to be legal tender.

- The disapproval of cryptocurrencies by the government is due to the fact that such currencies are highly volatile, used for illicit Internet transactions, and wholly outside the ambit of the state.
- In 2018, the RBI did send a circular to banks directing them not to provide services for those trading in cryptocurrencies.
- Those challenging the RBI Circular in the Supreme Court had argued that these were commodities and not currencies. Therefore, RBI did not have the jurisdiction.
- The circular was set aside by SC, which found it to be “disproportionate”.
- Regulatory bodies like RBI and Sebi etc also don't have a legal framework to directly regulate cryptocurrencies as they are neither currencies nor assets or securities or commodities issued by an identifiable user.

INTERNATIONAL

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

USA PLANS TO RE-ENGAGE WITH UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL



Date: 10th February 2021

Key Highlights:

- The USA has announced plans to re-engage with the much-maligned UN Human Rights Council that the former President withdrew from almost three years ago.
- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system. It was founded in 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) that had been strongly criticised for allowing countries with poor human rights records to be members.

- Functions: (1) It investigates allegations of breaches of human rights in UN member states; (2) It also addresses important thematic human rights issues such as freedom of expression, women's rights, LGBT rights, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.
- The UNHRC works closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- India has been elected to the UNHRC for three years beginning January 1, 2019.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NORD STREAM 2 PIPELINE



Date: 12th February 2021

Key Highlights:

- In a development that could increase tensions between the USA and Germany, the association which is building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline has said that it has resumed work on the controversial project.
- In 2015, Gazprom and 5 other European energy firms decided to build Nord Stream 2, valued at around \$11 billion.
- The 1,200 km pipeline will run from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany.
- The under-construction pipeline will run along with the already-completed Nord Stream 1 system, and the two together will supply an aggregate of 110 billion cubic meters of gas to Germany per year.
- Nord Stream 2 has drawn criticism from the US, where it is believed that the project would increase Europe's dependence on Russia for natural gas, thus strengthening its President.
- Currently, EU countries already rely on Russia for 40% of their gas needs.



IDIEAS

NATIONAL

BANKING & FINANCE

INDEX-LINKED INSURANCE POLICIES (ILIP)



Date: 11th February 2021

Key Features:

- The panel constituted by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has provided a recommendation to introduce Index-Linked Insurance Policies (ILIP).
- The committee for the same was headed by Dinesh Pant.
- Thus after the introduction of ILIP, a new product will be added to the other two insurance categories namely, Unit Linked Insurance Plan (ULIP) and Traditional Plans.
- The returns from ILIP will be linked to benchmark indices.
- ILIP plan will be suggested as a pension plan product.
- It will be a complementary or an alternative option to the conventional guaranteed products which are currently available like annuities, saving products or ULIPs.

TRANSPORT

INDIA'S FIRST DIESEL CONVERTED CNG TRACTOR



Date: 14th February 2021

Key Features:

- Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari launched India's first CNG tractor.
- The first ever Diesel CNG Tractor will help the farmers to save Rs 1 lakhs annually on fuel costs.
- The Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Tractor is jointly developed by Thane, Maharashtra based Rawmatt Techno Solutions and Tomasetto Achille India.
- This tractor is cost-effective as well as environment-friendly as it makes use of CNG, which is a clean fuel.

ECONOMY

ONE-PERSON COMPANIES



Date: 11th February 2021

Key Features:

- In her Budget speech, Union Finance announced measures to ease norms on setting up one-person companies (OPCs).
- As the name suggests, an one-person company is a company that can be formed by just one person as a shareholder.
- These companies can be contrasted with private companies, which require a minimum of two members to get going.
- However, for all practical purposes, these are like private companies.
- However, the regulatory procedures for single-person companies are much more simplified in comparison to a normal company.
- It is not a new concept. Such a concept already exists in many countries.
- In India, the concept was introduced in the Companies Act of 2013.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

PROPERTIES OF THE 99TH ELEMENT IN THE PERIODIC TABLE REPORTED



Date: 12th February 2021

Key Features:

- A team of scientists at the Berkeley Lab has reported some of the properties of element 99 in the periodic table called “Einsteinium”, named after Albert Einstein.
- For the first time, researchers have been able to characterise some of the properties of this element.
- It was discovered in 1952 in the debris of the first hydrogen bomb (the detonation of a thermonuclear device called “Ivy Mike” in the Pacific Ocean).
- The most common isotope of the element, einsteinium 253 has a half-life of 20 days.
- Because of its high radioactivity and short half-life of all einsteinium isotopes, even if the element was present on Earth during its formation, it has most certainly decayed.
- This is the reason that it cannot be found in nature and needs to be manufactured using very precise and intense processes.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

DETAILED GENOME MAP OF MALARIA VECTOR UNVEILED

Date: 14th February 2021

Key Features:

- Scientists have unveiled the detailed genome of the malaria mosquito vector.
- Thousands of new genes vital for the development of genetic control strategies of disease transmission were revealed.
- To engineer advanced forms of defence against malaria transmission, scientists require intricate knowledge of the genomes of vector mosquitoes.
- CRISPR technology is a gene-editing tool that allows researchers to easily alter DNA sequences and modify gene function.
- They produced a new reference genome for the Asian malaria vector mosquito *Anopheles stephensi*.
- With the newly upgraded *Anopheles stephensi* genome, the team unearthed more than 3,000 genes.



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Nurturing Ambitions