

Week 1 Current Affairs Update

1st - 6th March 2021

EVENTS

NATIONAL

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

16th FICCI Higher Education Summit



Date: 1st March 2021

The 16th edition of the FICCI Higher Education Summit was held in New Delhi recently.

Key Points:

- The summit was addressed by Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.
- The summit was organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The theme of the summit: 'Higher Education @ 2030: R.I.S.E- Resilience. Innovation. Sustainability. Enterprise'.
- The Union Education Minister addressed the summit by discussing current trends in higher education for the development of India.
- He also mentioned the importance of National Education Policy 2020, by highlighting that it is based on major pillars like access, equality, affordability and accountability.

G20 FINANCE MINISTERS AND CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS (FMCBG) MEETING



Date: 1st March 2021

The Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, participated in the First G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting.

Key Points:

- The meeting was held under the Italian Presidency.
- The meeting was held to discuss policy actions to have transformative and equitable recovery.
- The dignitaries discussed global economic outlook, financial sector issues, financial inclusion and sustainable finance.
- The Finance Minister highlighted India's vaccination programme at the meeting.
- The dignitaries discussed the implications of climate change on global growth and financial stability. In this regard, India's FM stated the importance of the transfer of green technologies and scaling up of climate finance.

MARITIME INDIA SUMMIT 2021



Date: 2nd February 2021

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Maritime India Summit 2021'.

Key Points:

- The summit was organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- Denmark is the partner country for the three-day summit.

- The Summit visualized a roadmap for India's Maritime sector for next decade.
- It will work to propel India to the forefront of the Global Maritime Sector.
- Eminent speakers from several countries shall attend the Summit.

SPACE

ISRO LAUNCHED THE FIRST SATELLITE OF THE YEAR 2021



Date: 1st March 2021

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the first satellite of the year 2021.

Key Points:

- ISRO launched the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C51, which also carried Amazonia-1 and 18 other satellites.
- It was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- The launching of C51 has marked the 53rd mission of PSLV.
- In the first move, the PSLV-C51 launched the Amazonia-1 satellite of Brazil and then followed by 18 co-passenger payloads which were launched from the first launch pad of the spaceport.
- One of these satellites carried an e-copy of the Bhagavad Gita and a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to space.
- Amazonia-1 is the optical earth observation satellite of the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

AGRICULTURE

6TH TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION-CUM-SEED MELA



Date: 2nd March 2021

The Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir and Chancellor of the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Science and Technology (SKUAST), Manoj Sinha, inaugurated the 6th Technology Exhibition cum Seed Sale Mela.

Key Points:

- It was inaugurated at the Shalimar campus of the SKUAST.
- The theme of the event: ‘Shaping the Future Farming for Better Returns’.
- The event observed the showcasing of various stalls which described farmers welfare schemes and programs, farm machinery, and organic products.
- Lt Governor Manoj Sinha appreciated the importance of conducting such events, as it allows farmers to access reliable and updated information in farming and reduce major risks in farming activities.
- At the exhibition, a farmer-scientist interaction programme was also arranged.

‘CSIR FLORICULTURE MISSION’



Date: 6th March 2021

The Union Minister of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan launched the ‘CSIR Floriculture Mission’ in a virtual manner.

Key Points:

- Under this mission, the CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) will integrate the latest technologies in the area of Floriculture.
- The mission aims to focus on floral crops, seasonal crops and cultivation of flower crops for honey bee rearing and wild ornaments.
- The mission will also help to create job opportunities in the Floriculture sector.
- The Floriculture sector will be enhanced through various advanced technologies which will be used in this mission.
- The mission will also lead to an increase in the number of nursery, floriculture farms in the country.

ECONOMY

NSE TO SET UP IBX AT GIFT CITY, GUJARAT



Date: 3rd March 2021

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has signed MoU with various entities to set up an International Bullion Exchange (IBX), clearing corporation and depository at Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT) City in Gujarat.

Key Points:

- The MoU is signed to fulfil the motto of GOI, 'to make India a price setter in bullion through GIFT International Finance Service Centre (IFSC) and in accordance with the International Financial Services Centres Authority (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020 and other applicable laws'.
- Entities with whom the NSE has signed MoU are:
 - o (a) Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd
 - o (b) India INX International Exchange Ltd
 - o (c) National Securities Depository Ltd
 - o (d) Central Depository Services (India) Ltd.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

'AI GAME CHANGERS' PROGRAM



Date: 3rd March 2021

The 'AI Game Changers' program will be soon launched by the National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom).

Key Points:

- The program will be launched with an aim to promote AI (Artificial Intelligence) based innovations in India.
- Microsoft will be the innovation partner for Nasscom's 'AI Game Changers' program.
- Both Nasscom and Microsoft will work to develop and promote the program.
- The program will be launched under the 'AI for India' Mission and will work to have impactful and scalable AI-based innovation in the country.
- For this program, Nasscom will identify the AI innovators who will be implementing AI-based innovations at Nasscom's Xperience AI Summit.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

'SUGAMYA BHARAT APP'



Date: 4th March 2021

The Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Thaawarchand Gehlot launched the 'Sugamya Bharat App'.

Key Points:

- The app has been developed by the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department, which comes under the Social Justice and Empowerment ministry.
- 'Sugamya Bharat App' is a crowdsourcing mobile application that will help people with disabilities and elder people to register accessibility related issues.
- The app is launched with an aim to sensitize and enhance accessibility in three main pillars of the Accessible India Campaign, which includes the ICT ecosystem, transportation sector, and the built environment.
- Through this app, people with disabilities and elder people can register for facing accessibility-related problems in transportation facilities, in buildings or at any infrastructure just by uploading the pictures on the app.

EMPLOYMENT

KARNATAKA'S ENGINEERING RESEARCH POLICY

Why this policy?

- To significantly boost State's ER&D sector in five years
- To create over 50,000 new local jobs in the sector
- To develop a research-oriented skilled talent pool
- To attract ER&D investment into Karnataka
- To bridge the gap between academia and industry
- To take industries beyond Bengaluru



What going beyond Bengaluru gets you

- Rental reimbursement
- Recruitment assistance
- Investment subsidy
- Access to an ER&D fund
- Access to State's testing/prototyping infrastructure.
- Access to Innovation Labs Programme

Date: 4th March 2021

India's first Engineering Research & Development (ER&D) Policy was launched recently by Karnataka.

Key Points:

- The objective of the policy is to raise Karnataka's contribution to the sector to 45% in the next five years.
- The policy has the potential to create over 50,000 jobs in the ER&D space in five years.
- ER&D has the potential to become a \$100-billion industry in India in the next five years.
- The sector is the fastest growing industry in India with a CAGR of 12.8%.
- The global engineering research and development industry is also expected to reach \$2 trillion by 2025.
- Five key focus sectors: Aerospace and defence; auto, auto components and EV; biotechnology, pharma and medical devices; semiconductors, telecom, ESDM; and software products.

REPORTS & INDICES

EASE OF LIVING INDEX 2020



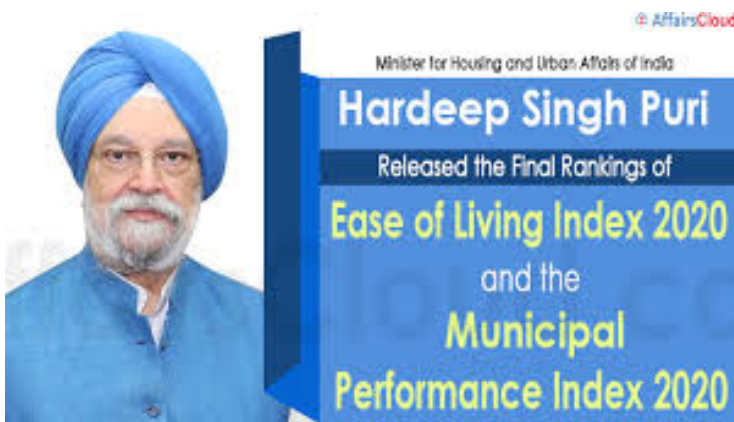
Date: 5th March 2021

The Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri released the Ease of Living Index 2020.

Key Points:

- The Ease of Living Index ranks the cities by evaluating the quality of life and impact of initiatives for urban development.
- The index is topped by Bengaluru in the category of a population of more than a million.
- The second and third ranks are marked by Pune and Ahmedabad respectively in the category of the population of more than a million.
- Whereas, the category of population less than million is topped by Shimla.
- The second and third ranks are marked by Bhubaneswar and Silvassa respectively in the category of population less than a million.

MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE INDEX 2020



Date: 5th March 2021

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has released the Municipal Performance Index 2020.

Key Points:

- It seeks to simplify and evaluate the complexities in local governance practice and promote the ethos of transparency and accountability.
- The MPI 2020 examined the sectoral performance of 111 municipalities (with Delhi being assessed separately for NDMC, and the three Municipal Corporations) across five verticals which comprise 20 sectors and 100 indicators in all totality.
- The five verticals under MPI are Services, Finance, Policy, Technology and Governance.
- In the Million+ category: Indore has emerged as the highest ranked municipality, followed by Surat and Bhopal.
- In the Less than Million category: New Delhi Municipal Council has emerged as the leader, followed by Tirupati and Gandhinagar.

ENVIRONMENT

NAG RIVER POLLUTION ABATEMENT PROJECT



Date: 5th march 2021

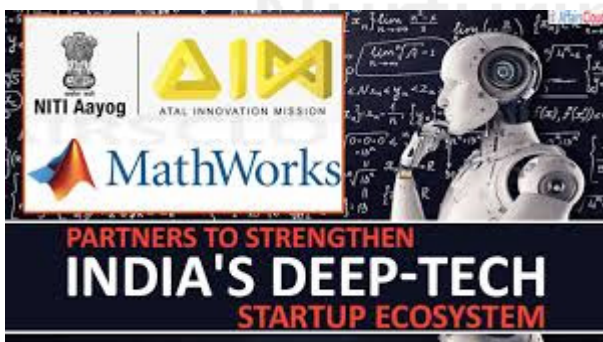
The Nag River Pollution Abatement Project has been approved at a cost of Rs. 2,117.54 crores.

Key Points:

- The project was approved under the National River Conservation Plan.
- It will be implemented by the National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD).
- It will reduce the pollution level in terms of untreated sewage, flowing solid waste and other impurities flowing into the Nag river and its tributaries.
- The Nag River is a river flowing through Nagpur, Maharashtra.
- The city derives its name from the Nag river.
- Forming a part of the Kanhan-Pench river system, the Nag River originates in Lava hills near wadi.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ATAL INNOVATION MISSION PARTNERED WITH MATHWORKS



Date: 6th March 2021

NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission entered into a partnership with MathWorks.

Key Points:

- MathWorks is a developing organisation of mathematical computing software for scientists and engineers.

- Both entities have partnered to develop mathematical computing software in order to boost deep-technology based startups in India.
- The partnership will allow the startups to have access to the tools of Math-Works like MATLAB and Simulink.
- The startups will also get the benefit of online training sessions for these tools.
- The partnership will provide opportunities for deep-tech startups to reach national and global levels by developing their innovative products and launching them at all levels.

DEFENCE

DRDO CONDUCTED TEST OF SOLID FUEL DUCTED RAMJET (SFDR) TECHNOLOGY



Date: 6th March 2021

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted the successful flight test of Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology.

Key Points:

- The flight test was conducted from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.
- The experts also simulated and tested the air-launch scenario using the booster motor.
- The booster motor and nozzle-less motor performed as per operational specifications during the test.
- The performance of the technology and missiles was monitored through Electro-Optical, Radar and Telemetry instruments.
- Various other technologies along with SFDR technology were also verified during the testing operation. This will help DRDO to develop long-range air-to-air missiles.

NEGEV LIGHT MACHINE GUNS (LMGS)



Date: 7th March 2021

The Indian Army will induct the first lot of new Light Machine Guns (LMG) from Israel.

Key Points:

- The contracted Negev 7.62X51 mm LMG is a combat proven weapon.
- It is currently used by several countries around the globe.
- This LMG will greatly enhance the lethality and range of a soldier.

INTERNATIONAL

HEALTHCARE

GHANA FIRST COUNTRY TO RECEIVE VACCINE UNDER COVAX



Date: 1st March 2021

Ghana has become the first country in the world to receive a shipment of coronavirus vaccines under the COVAX program.

Key Points:

- About 600,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines were sent to Accra in Ghana on February 23.
- The vaccine is manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), Pune which is the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world.
- The COVAX program is led by the vaccine alliance GAVI, WHO and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) in partnership with UNICEF, vaccine manufacturers and the World Bank, among others.

- The Program aims to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally.
- It is supposed to be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history.

2ND GLOBAL BIO-INDIA-2021



Date: 2nd March 2021

The 2nd Global-Bio India 2021 was inaugurated by Union Minister of Science and Technology Dr Harsh Vardhan in New Delhi in a virtual manner.

Key Points:

The theme of the event: ‘Transforming Lives’ with the tagline ‘Biosciences to Bio-economy’.

The Global-Bio India 2021 aims to showcase the importance of the biotechnology sector of India at the National and International Level.

GOI has set a target to build a USD 150 billion bio-economy by 2025.

During this event, 24 sessions were conducted to define the role of Biotechnology. The few of the sessions were, The COVID-19 vaccine journey from Science to delivery, India Fights COVID, Health Conclave, Clean Energy Conclave, Phytopharma and Traditional Knowledge etc.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY (CDP)



Date: 2nd March 2021

The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) has recommended Bangladesh to be removed from the category of Least Developed Country (LDC).

Key Points:

- Bangladesh has fulfilled the eligibility criteria in terms of per capita income, human assets and economic and environmental vulnerability.
- This is the second consecutive time since 2018 that the CDP has made recommendations for Bangladesh.
- The CDP decides on the LDC status of a country based on three criteria- (1) per capita income; (2) human assets index and economic vulnerability index.
- A country must achieve at least two of the three criteria at two consecutive triennial reviews to be considered for graduation.
- The proposal will be sent to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for endorsement in June to be finally approved by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021.

DEFENCE

IAF TO PARTICIPATE IN EXERCISE DESERT FLAG-VI



Date: 3rd March 2021

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is set to participate in Exercise Desert Flag-VI, which is a multinational exercise.

Key Points:

- It is being held from 3rd March to 27th March 2021 at Al Dhafra air base in the UAE.
- The Exercise Desert Flag is hosted by the United Arab Emirates Air Force.
- The other countries participating in the exercise are: United States (US), France, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Greece, Jordan, Kuwait and Egypt will be the observers for the exercise.
- India's six Su-30-MKI fighters, two C-17 and one IL-78 Tanker aircraft will be part of the Desert Flag Exercise.
- Other international fighter jets participating in the exercise include France's Dassault Rafales, Mirage-2000s, Russia's Sukhoi and America's F-15s and F-16s.

REPORTS & INDICES

11TH QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2021



Date: 5th March 2021

The 11th edition of QS World University Rankings for 2021 was released which ranks top universities from around the world.

Key Points:

- The ranking is topped by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the United States.
- The IIT Madras is ranked at 30th position for the Petroleum Engineering programme.
- The IIT Bombay and IIT Kharagpur are at 41st and 44th rank positions for the Mineral and Mining engineering programme.
- The IISc Bangalore is ranked at 78th position for Material Science and at 93rd position for Chemistry.
- IIT Delhi is ranked at 54th position in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. The OP Jindal Global University is ranked at 76th position for Law.

DEFENCE

INDIA & PHILIPPINES SIGNED KEY DEFENCE PACT



Date: 5th March 2021

The India and Philippines have entered into a key pact for the sale of defence equipment.

Key Points:

- The pact is named as ‘implementing arrangements for the procurement of defence material and equipment’.
- As per this pact, the Philippines will purchase BrahMos cruise missiles from India.
- The BrahMos cruise missiles are produced by India and Russia jointly.
- The pact was signed by Philippines Defence Undersecretary Raymundo Elefante and India’s Ambassador to the Philippines Shambu S. Kumaran.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA-SWEDEN VIRTUAL SUMMIT

India-Sweden Virtual Summit on Bilateral Issues



Date: 6th March 2021

The India-Sweden Virtual Summit was held recently to discuss bilateral relations in various sectors of both nations.

Key Points:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi headed the summit along with his counterpart Stefan Lofven of Sweden.
- PM Modi congratulated Sweden’s decision to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- Both nations discussed the COVID-19 pandemic situation and vaccination drives.
- They assured each other to cooperate in areas like elderly care, infection control, digitalization, non-communicable diseases, and start-ups.
- Both the dignitaries welcomed the decision to set up Sweden-India Health Hub at AIIMS-Jodhpur.



PEOPLE

INTERNATIONAL

APPOINTMENTS

LIGIA NORONHA



Date: 2nd March 2021

Why in news: Appointed as the Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Key Points:

- The UN appointed Indian economist Ligia Noronha as Assistant Secretary-General.
- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has announced the appointment of Ligia Noronha of India as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme.
- Noronha is an economist with over 30 years of international experience in the field of sustainable development.
- She has worked since 2014 as Director of UNEP's Economy Division based in Nairobi, leading UNEP's work on climate mitigation and energy transitions on inclusive green economies, sustainable consumption and production as well as on trade and sustainable finance.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

WHATSAPP'S NEW POLICY UNDER SCANNER



Date: 3rd March 2021

Key Highlights:

- The Central government has informed the Delhi High Court that it was examining WhatsApp's controversial new privacy policy, which is scheduled to come into effect from May 15, at the highest level.
- The court was hearing a petition claiming that WhatsApp's new privacy policy violates the right to privacy guaranteed under the Constitution.
- The plea said the new policy "virtually gives a 360-degree profile into a person's online activity" without there being any supervision of the government.
- The plea sought direction to issue guidelines to ensure such change in privacy policy by WhatsApp are carried out.
- The new Whatsapp policy contradicts the recommendations of the Srikrishna Committee report, which forms the basis of the Data Protection Bill 2019.
- The principle of Data Localisation, which aims to put curbs on the transfer of personal data outside the country, may come in conflict with WhatsApp's new privacy policy.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

CHINESE CYBER ATTACK FOILED



Date: 1st March 2021

Key Highlights:

- Recently, few “State-sponsored” Chinese hacker groups targeted various Indian power centres. However, these groups have been thwarted after government cyber agencies warned it about their activities.
- Union Power Ministry has clarified that there is no impact on any of the functionalities carried out by the Power Sector Operations Corporation (POSOCO) due to the referred threat. No data breach/data loss has been detected due to these incidents.
- According to U.S. cyber security and intelligence firm: Chinese state-sponsored actors may have deployed malware into Indian power grids and seaports as border tensions between India and China began escalating last May, culminating in a deadly clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in mid-June.
- An October 12 grid failure in Mumbai may have been caused by the Chinese malware.

SOCIAL

PAKISTAN TO REMAIN ON FATF ‘GREY LIST’



Date: 2nd March 2021

Key Highlights:

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has decided to keep Pakistan on its terrorism financing “grey list”.
- Pakistan must demonstrate in taking action against UN-designated terrorists and their associates to get removed from the grey list.
- Once Pakistan completes three unfulfilled tasks, a decision will be taken on its present status in June.
- Pakistan has failed to fulfil six out of 27 obligations of the FATF.
- The FATF is an inter-governmental body set up in 1989 to combat money laundering, terror financing and other related threats to the international financial system.
- Pakistan has been on its grey list since June 2018.

REPORTS & INDICES

‘FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2021 - DEMOCRACY UNDER SIEGE’



Date: 7th March 2021

The United States-based Think Tank Freedom House has released the report titled ‘Freedom in the World 2021 - Democracy under Siege’.

Key Points:

- As per this report, India’s status is downgraded from ‘Free’ to ‘Partly Free’.
- In the current report, India’s score is 67. In 2018, India scored 77 and in 2020, the score was 71.
- The ‘most free countries’ are Finland, Norway and Sweden. These countries have secured a score of 100.
- The ‘least free countries’ with a score of 1 are Tibet and Syria.
- The major reasons for the down gradation of India are: (a) Increased intimidation of academics and journalists (b) Government pressure on human right organisations (c) COVID19 response (d) Internet shutdowns (e) Freezing Amnesty International’s assets.



IDIEAS

NATIONAL

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

E-DAAKHIL PORTAL



Date: 2nd march 2021

Key Features:

- E-Daakhil portal of the Department of Consumer Affairs for Consumer grievance redressal is now operational in 15 States/UTs.
- E-filing was launched by National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) in September, 2020.
- Delhi was the first state to implement it.
- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, has provision for e-filing of consumer complaints in the Consumer Commissions and online payment of the fees for filing a complaint.
- The digital software for filing complaints has features like e-Notice, filing written responses by the opposite party, alerts via SMS/Email, etc.

TRANSPORT

MOBILE TRAIN RADIO COMMUNICATION (MTRC)



Date: 5th March 2021

Key Features:

- Mobile Train Radio Communication (MTRC) System has been commissioned in Western Railway Trains in Mumbai.
- MTRC system is an effective and a technologically advanced communication system.
- It can play an important role in preventing train accidents and reducing delays through effective communication.
- MTRC acts in a similar way to that of Air traffic control (ARC) for aircrafts.
- The system will monitor, track and aid in communication between the trains and the control room.
- This is the first time that MTRC is commissioned in Indian Railways.

HEALTHCARE

TLR 7/8: COVAXIN'S KEY MOLECULE DEVELOPED BY INDIAN LAB



Date: 4th March 2021

Key Features:

- The Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) lab helped in the development of key molecules for COVAXIN.
- Covaxin is the indigenous vaccine developed by the Bharat Biotech International Limited.
- It is a highly purified, whole virion, inactivated SARS-Cov-2.
- It has been formulated with 'Algel-IMDG', which contains chemically absorbed TLR7/8 as an adjuvant onto aluminium hydroxide gel to generate the requisite type of immune responses without damaging the body.

