

# Week 4 Current Affairs Update

24<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

## EVENTS

### NATIONAL

## POLICIES & SCHEMES

### KEN BETWA LINK PROJECT



**Date:** 24th March 2021

The governments of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh signed MoU with Union Jal Shakti Ministry.

#### Key Points:

- The MoU was signed to implement the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project.
- The Ken-Betwa river interlinking project will carry water from surplus regions to drought prone and water-scarce regions through interlinking of rivers.
- The water will be transferred from Ken river in Panna district in Madhya Pradesh to Betwa river in Uttar Pradesh by constructing the Dhaudan Dam and a 221 km-long canal.
- The Project will benefit the water starved region of Bundelkhand. The beneficiary districts are Jhansi, Mahoba, Lalitpur and Hamirpur of Uttar Pradesh.

## ENERGY

### COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME FOR STRENGTHENING OF TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH AND SIKKIM



**Date:** 24th March 2021

The Union Cabinet has approved the Revised Cost Estimate (RCE) of Comprehensive Scheme for Strengthening of Transmission & Distribution in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim at an estimated cost of Rs. 9129 crore.

#### **Key Points:**

- The scheme is being implemented through POWERGRID, a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under Ministry of Power in association with Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The scheme was initially approved in December, 2014 as a Central Sector Plan Scheme.
- The entire cost of the scheme will be borne by the Central Government.
- It is targeted to be commissioned in phased manner by December 2021.
- After commissioning, the created transmission and distribution system will be owned and maintained by the respective State Utilities.
- It is a major step towards economic development of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim through strengthening of Intra – State Transmission and Distribution systems.

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

### NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ALLIED AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS BILL, 2021



**Date:** 25th March 2021

The Lok Sabha cleared the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professionals Bill, 2021. It was passed by the Rajya Sabha last week.

### Key Points:

- The Bill seeks to regulate and standardise the education and practice of allied and healthcare professionals.
- Definition of ‘allied health professional’: An associate, technician, or technologist trained to support the diagnosis and treatment of any illness, disease, injury, or impairment.
- Such a professional should have obtained a diploma or degree under this Bill.
- Definition of a ‘healthcare professional’: A scientist, therapist, or any other professional who studies, advises, research, supervises, or provides preventive, curative, rehabilitative, therapeutic, or promotional health services.
- Such a professional should have obtained a degree under this Bill.
- The Bill sets up the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

### FM LAUNCHED CENTRAL SCRUTINY CENTRE & IEPFA APP



**Date:** 26th March 2021

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman virtually inaugurated Central Scrutiny Centre (CSC) and launched the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) mobile app.

### Key Points:

- The Central Scrutiny Centre (CSC) is an initiative of the Corporate Affairs Ministry. This centre will help to scrutinise the filings by users under straight through processes.
- The IEPFA app will develop financial literacy through investors’ awareness, education, and protection among investors. The app will help to track the status and progress of the IEPF claim refund process.
- The app will allow investors and common citizens to file a report on the suspected fraudulent schemes.

- Both initiatives will develop a new corporate and investor-friendly ecosystem.

## ENVIRONMENT

### MOU SIGNED FOR NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME (NCAP)



**Date:** 27th March 2021

The MoU is signed by representatives of State Pollution Control Boards, Urban Local Bodies and Institutes of Repute (IoRs) for 132 identified cities for implementation of city specific action plans under National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

#### Key Points:

- NCAP is a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle air pollution problems across India in a comprehensive manner.
- It targets to achieve 20% to 30% reduction in Particulate Matter concentrations by 2024 (with 2017 as base year).
- A National Knowledge Network comprising leading air quality specialists has also been constituted as a technical advisory group to support activities under NCAP and guide local IoRs in conducting air quality research.

## ECONOMY

### 2ND TRANCHE OF COMMERCIAL COAL MINING

Gol launches auction for Second Tranche of Commercial Coal Mining



**Date:** 27th March 2021

India launched its 2nd Tranche of auction for commercial coal mining offering 67 mines for sale of coal. The Union Coal Minister launched the auction process.



## Key Points:

- This is the highest number of mines on offer in a particular tranche of auction after commencement of the auction regime since 2014.
- Out of the total 67 mines offered by the Ministry of Coal, 23 mines are under CM(SP) Act and 44 under MMDR Act.
- The coal mines on offer are spread across 6 States Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

## HEALTHCARE

### 7TH ANNUAL SUMMIT OF NATHEALTH



**Date:** 28th March 2021

The 7th annual summit of NATHEALTH was held recently.

## Key Points:

- The summit was addressed by Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan.
- The theme of the Summit: 'Indian Health system expansion in post-COVID era'.
- The main objective of the summit was to bring healthcare industries under a single platform to frame a path to deal with Post COVID 19 situation and to eradicate the pandemic.
- While addressing the summit, the Union Minister focussed on GOI's vision of Health for all. He also discussed National Health Policy drafted by India.

### TRIBAL TB INITIATIVE



**Date:** 29th March 2021

The Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has launched the 'Tribal TB Initiative' with an aim to achieve the target of TB Mukht Bharat.

### Key Points:

- In this regard, a Guidance Note on Joint Action Plan for eradicating TB was framed.
- The joint action plan is set for 2021-25 and it includes:
- Vulnerability mapping followed by quarterly ACF and TB preventive therapy
- Capacity building for frontline workers and vulnerability reduction
- Multisectoral collaboration for social determinants
- Budgeted district health plan
- Along with the joint action plan, a Special Edition of Tribal Ministry's Publication 'ALEKH' on TB, and a document on Tribal Tuberculosis (TB) Initiative was also released.

## ART & CULTURE

### MAHARAJA CHHATRASAL CONVENTION CENTRE



**Date:** 31st March 2021

The 'Maharaja Chhatrasal Convention Centre' was inaugurated at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh.

### Key Points:

- It was inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel.
- The 'Maharaja Chhatrasal Convention Centre' is built under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism, which has thus added a feature to the UNESCO World Heritage site at Khajuraho.
- The centre will host various conferences and meetings.
- It is equipped with modern infrastructure and modern amenities. The convention hall is 14880 sq ft of area.
- They will also launch "MICE Roadshow – Meet in India" Brand and Roadmap for the Promotion of India as MICE Destination (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### MOU BETWEEN INDIA & JAPAN FOR WATER RESOURCES



**Date:** 24th March 2021

The Union Cabinet gave the approval to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between Japan and India in the water resources sector.

#### **Key Points:**

- The MoC will help in facilitating irrigation requirements, water security, and sustainability in water resources development.
- It was signed between the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Jal Shakti Ministry, GOI and the Water and Disaster Management Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan.
- The MoC will help in enhancing cooperation in water technology and water and delta management which will lead to implementing various projects between both nations.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

### WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY FORUM 2021



**Date:** 25th March 2021

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2021 was held recently.

#### **Key Points:**

- The WSIS Forum is the world's largest annual gathering of ICT for the development community.
- It was organised by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD.
- The forum observed the participation of Secretary General ITU, Ministers of Russia, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Zimbabwe, Iran and leaders and high-level dignitaries.
- India was represented by the Minister of State for Communication, Sanjay Dhotre.
- At the forum Union Minister Sanjay Dhotre highlighted the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in various sectors of growth.
- He highlighted the policies and programs adopted by India to have a digital drive in the country.
- He mentioned the BharatNet flagship programme of India which aims to have telecom infrastructure development in remote areas of the country.

## REPORTS & INDICES

### INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INDEX 2021



**Date:** 26th March 2021

The 9th edition of the International Intellectual Property Index 2021 was released.

#### Key Points:

- It was released by the US Chamber of Commerce Global Innovation Policy Centre (GIPC).
- As per the index, India is ranked at 40th position among 53 nations with a score of 38.40.
- The index is topped by the USA with a score of 95.31. The second and third rank positions are marked by the UK and Germany respectively.
- The index ranking is framed by evaluating IP rights, patents, copyright policies, commercialization of IP assets and ratification of International Treaties for all 53 nations.



- The report suggests that India needs a unified IP framework for sectors like advanced manufacturing, biopharmaceutical products and creative contents.
- The report also suggests that India needs to remove bureaucratic barriers and make Cinematographic law amendments to improve its rank position in the index.

## SPORTS

### 2021 PARA SHOOTING WORLD CUP



**Date:** 27th March 2021

The 2021 Para Shooting World Cup tournament was held in Al Ain, UAE.

#### Key Points:

- In the event, India bagged 7 medals and finished at 3rd position. Ukraine topped in the number of medals by winning a total of 11 medals.
- The winners from India in each category are:
- Singhraj: Gold medal in Men's 10m Air Pistol
- Manish Narwal: Gold medal Mixed 50m Pistol
- Avani Lekhara: Silver medal in women's 10m air rifle standing
- Rahul Jakhar: Bronze medal in Mixed 25m pistol
- Singhraj: Bronze medal in Mixed 50m pistol
- Sriharsha Devaraddi Ramakrishna: Bronze medal in mixed 10m air rifle standing
- Sidhartha Babu: Bronze medal in mixed 50m rifle prone

## CONFERENCE & SUMMITS

### 116TH MEET OF PERMANENT INDUS COMMISSION (PIC)



**Date:** 27th March 2021

The 116th edition of Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) was held between India and Pakistan in New Delhi.

### Key Points:

- The 116th PIC meet was held under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT).
- The Indian side was represented by Pradeep Kumar Saxena, India's Commissioner for IWT and officers from Central Water Commission, Central Electricity Authority and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation.
- Pakistan's side was represented by Syed Muhammad Meher Ali Shah, Commissioner for IWT.
- The dignitaries held a discussion about two projects, namely, Pakal Dul (1000 MW) and Lower Kalnai (48 MW).
- Pakistan has asked India to share data related to the design of other Indian hydropower projects being planned to be developed, which was accepted by the Indian side and assured to cooperate in data sharing.

## ENVIRONMENT

### EARTH HOUR



**Date:** 27th March 2021

The Earth Hour is being observed on 27th March 2021.

### Key Points:

- Earth Hour is the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)'s annual initiative that began in 2007.
- It is held every year on the last Saturday of March.
- It encourages people from more than 180 countries to switch off the lights from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm as per their local time.
- The idea is to refrain from the use of non-essential lighting to save energy in a symbolic call for environmental protection.
- Earth Hour has become a catalyst for positive environmental impact, driving major legislative changes by harnessing the power of the people and collective action.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### CHINA AND IRAN SIGN 25-YEAR 'STRATEGIC PACT'



**Date:** 27th March 2021

China and Iran signed a 25-year “strategic cooperation pact” recently.

#### Key Points:

- It includes “political, strategic and economic” components.
- This document can be very effective in deepening relations
- It would establish a blueprint for “reciprocal investments in the fields of transport, ports, energy, industry and services”.
- The agreement comes amid a major push from China to back Iran as it deals with the continuing weight of sanctions
- China is its largest trading partner.

## REPORTS & INDICES

### WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2021 – DATA FOR BETTER LIVES



**Date:** 28th March 2021

The World Bank released a report titled ‘World Development Report 2021:Data for Better Lives’.

#### Key Points:

- The report is a blueprint which describes how to make use of power and solutions to improve the lives of poor people and advance development objectives, by ensuring that no one is left behind.
- The report highlights various ways to improve the lives of people.

- The report describes the Social Contract for Data in order to get more value out of data while protecting people against harm and ensuring access and representation. It also mentions that different data-creating and data-using parties should collaborate to attain the objective of the report.
- It mentions that Value, Equity and Trust are the three elements of a social contract for data.
- The report supports the nations to identify where the public and private sector investments are the most critical.
- It highlights defining rich welfare programs to have policy reforms and mentions the sectors in which initiatives can be held to facilitate cross-border cooperation.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIA AND BANGLADESH SIGNED VARIOUS MOUS



**Date:** 29th March 2021

India's PM Narendra Modi paid a visit to Bangladesh, during which both the nations signed MoUs in various sectors to boost their cooperation.

#### **Key Points:**

- The MoUs were signed in the sector of trade, resilience, sports facilities, ICT, Disaster management and mitigation.
- During the visit, the PMs of both the nations discussed bilateral cooperation and the progress activities in areas of health, trade, connectivity, energy, developmental cooperation and many more.
- Both the dignitaries agreed to run 'Mitali Express', a direct passenger train between Dhaka and New Jalpaiguri.
- India also granted 109 ambulances to Bangladesh and 1.2mn of Covid vaccine doses to eradicate pandemic from the country.



## DEFENCE

### NAVIES OF INDIA AND THE US CONDUCTED 'PASSEX'



**Date:** 30th March 2021

The Indian Navy and the United States Navy conducted Passage Exercise i.e. 'PASSEX'.

#### Key Points:

- The naval exercise was held in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (Bay of Bengal).
- This is the first time that Indian Air Force fighters were part of this exercise.
- The Indian side was represented by warship 'Shivalik' and P8I, a long-range maritime patrol aircraft.
- The US side was represented by the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group.
- The objective behind PASSEX is to develop cooperation and interoperability among the forces.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### HEART OF ASIA – ISTANBUL PROCESS (HOA-IP)



**HEART of ASIA**  
ISTANBUL PROCESS

**Date:** 30th March 2021

India will attend the 9th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process on Afghanistan.

#### Key Points:

- The Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) is an initiative of Afghanistan and Turkey, which was officially launched at a conference hosted by Turkey in Istanbul in 2011.

- Since then, Afghanistan has been supported by 14 Participating Countries of the Heart of Asia Region, 16 Supporting Countries beyond the region and 12 Regional and International Organizations are leading and coordinating this Process.
- It is a platform for promoting regional security, economic and political co-operation centred on Afghanistan through dialogue and a set of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).
- The geographical area covering the 15 Participating Countries of the HoA-IP is defined as the Heart of Asia Region.
- It is one of the biggest regions in the world with a collective geographical area covering around 27% of the land area of the Earth.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIA-SOUTH KOREA FRIENDSHIP PARK



**Date:** 30th March 2021

India's First Indo-Korean Friendship Park was jointly inaugurated by Mr Suh Wook, Minister of National Defence, Republic of Korea and Rajnath Singh, Raksha Mantri, at Delhi Cantonment.

#### Key Points:

- The park's significance is not only because of it being a symbol of strong India-South Korea friendly relations, but also as a monument to India's contributions as part of 21 countries which participated in Korean war 1950-53, under the aegis of the United Nations.
- The park has been developed in joint consultation with the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Indian Army, Delhi Cantonment Board, Embassy of Korea and Korean War Veterans Association of India.
- One of the pillars in the park encompasses Nobel Laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's narration of Korea as "The Lamp of the East" which was published in Korean daily "Dong-A-ilbo" in 1929.

## INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

### INDIA ABSTAINS FROM VOTING ON RESOLUTION 46/L1



**Date:** 30th March 2021

India abstained from voting on a resolution in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that makes a wide-ranging and damaging commentary on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

#### **Key Points:**

- Resolution 46/L1 has decided, among other things, to “strengthen” the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights to collect evidence and develop possible strategies for future accountability processes for gross violations of human rights in Sri Lanka.
- It refers to “persistent” lack of accountability for rights abuses committed through the years by “all parties” in Sri Lanka.
- Most seriously, it expresses a lack of confidence in the ability of the present government to address the shortcomings.
- Among the 14 countries that abstained were Japan, Indonesia, Bahrain and Nepal.
- Among the 11 that voted against were China, Cuba, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Russia, and Venezuela.

## DEFENCE

### 11TH INDO-US JOINT SPECIAL FORCES EXERCISE VAJRA PRAHAR 2021



**Date:** 31st March 2021

The Special Forces of India and the US conducted the joint military exercise at Special Forces Training School located at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.

**Key Points:**

- The joint exercise by the Special Forces of both the countries is conducted alternatively between India and the United States.
- It was held to enhance interoperability between both the nations.
- It also leads to explore cooperation in areas like joint mission planning and operational tactics.
- This is the 11th edition of the exercise conducted at Special Forces Training School located at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- The 10th edition of VAJRA PRAHAR was held in 2019 at Seattle, USA.
- The exercise aims to share the best practices and experiences in areas such as joint mission planning and operational tactics as also to improve interoperability between the Special Forces of both nations.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIA AUSTRALIA TALKS ON DISARMAMENT, NON-PROLIFERATION AND EXPORT CONTROL



**Date:** 31st March 2021

India and Australia held joint talks on Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, and Export Control. This was the sixth edition of the same.

**Key Points:**

- They held joint discussions about the issues being faced in the areas of chemical, nuclear, biological disarmament and non-proliferation, outer space security, conventional weapons, and strategic export control.
- The discussions led to enhancement in the mutual cooperation of both nations and revealed the appreciation of national perspectives and global development on the disarmament and non-proliferation issues.
- These talks also helped in contributing to the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.



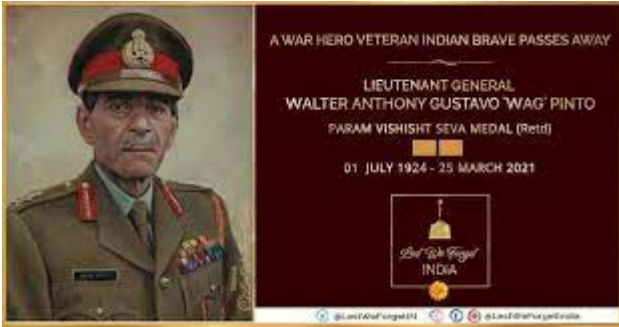


# PEOPLE

## NATIONAL

### OBITUARY

#### LT GEN 'WAG' PINTO



**Date:** 25th March 2021

1971 Battle of Basantar hero, Lt Gen Pinto (ret'd) passes away.

#### Key Points:

- Lieutenant General Walter Anthony Gustavo 'WAG' Pinto (Ret'd), a military hero who led an infantry division to a legendary victory in the 1971 India-Pakistan War has passed away at the age of 97.
- He was popularly known as 'Victor of Basantar' for his commanding of the 54th division in the battle as a Major General.
- For his role in this battle, he was awarded the prestigious Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM).
- General Pinto had written a book 'Bash on Regardless', in which he described the Battle of Basantar.
- The Battle of Basantar was one of the biggest ground battles ever fought by the Indian Army.
- The Battle gave birth to Bangladesh.

### AWARDS & HONOURS

#### SHARAD PAGARE



**Date:** 26th March 2021

**Why in news:** Selected for the prestigious Vyas Samman-2020.

**Key Points:**

- Renowned Hindi writer Professor Sharad Pagare will be awarded the prestigious Vyas Samman-2020 for his novel 'Patliputra ki Samragi'.
- For his contribution to Hindi literature, he has also been honoured with various awards including Bharat Bhushan Samman and Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Akademi.
- So far, the writer has printed six story collections, 5 novels, dissertations, and two performances.
- Professor Pagare's works have also been translated into various languages such as Oriya, English, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, and Telugu.
- The Vyas Samman is given by KK Birla Foundation for outstanding work in Hindi literature authored by an Indian citizen.

## AWARDS & HONOURS

### HARSH MARIWALA



**Date:** 27th March 2021

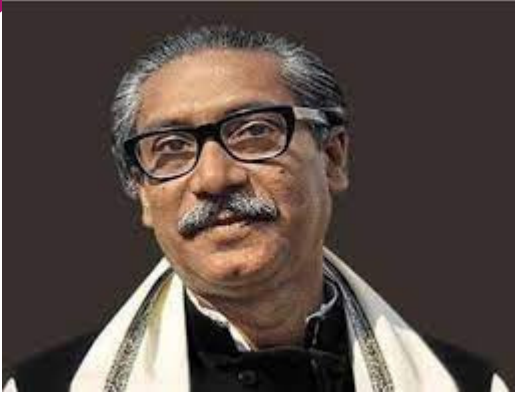
**Why in news:** Honoured as 'EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2020'.

**Key Points:**

- HarshC. Mariwala, chairman of Marico, was named the EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2020.
- He will now represent India at the EYWorld Entrepreneur of the Year Award on June 10.
- The EY Entrepreneur of the Year Awards previously Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards is an award sponsored by Ernst & Young in recognition of entrepreneurship.

## AWARDS & HONOURS

### BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN



**Date:** 27th March 2021

**Why in news:** Has been conferred with the Gandhi Peace Prize 2020.

#### **Key Points:**

- Gandhi Peace Prize for the year 2020 was given to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who is also called the Father of Nation in Bangladesh
- The late Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said Al Said has been given the prize for the year 2019.
- This year it is for the first time that the award has been given away posthumously.
- Gandhi Peace Prize is an annual award instituted by the Government of India since 1995, the 125th Birth Anniversary commemoration year of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or sex. The award carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a citation, a plaque and an exquisite traditional handicraft/ handloom item.

### MAHINDER GIRI



**Date:** 28th March 2021

**Why in news:** Won the International Ranger Award.

## Key Points:

- Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar has congratulated Mahinder Giri, range officer of Rajaji Tiger Reserve for being the only ranger from Asia to win the prestigious International Ranger Award for his contribution towards conservation.
- The award has been announced for 10 professionals across the world by the International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN and World Commission on Protected Areas WCPA.
- Developed through collaboration between the IUCN WCPA, the International Ranger Federation, Global Wildlife Conservation, and Conservation Allies, these awards, created in 2020, aim to highlight and felicitate the extraordinary work that rangers do in protected and conserved areas worldwide.



disha  
Nurturing Ambitions



# ISSUES

## NATIONAL

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

#### BIHAR SPECIAL ARMED POLICE BILL, 2021



**Date:** 25th March 2021

#### **Key Highlights:**

- The Bihar legislature witnessed noisy disorder inside and outside the Assembly on March 23-24 as Opposition parties opposed the government's attempt to pass the Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021.
- Protesting Opposition lawmakers were forcibly ousted by marshals and additional police forces called in by the Speaker's office, with many injured in the scuffle that followed. However, the contentious Bill was passed in both the Houses.
- The contentious bill proposes to set up a special armed force to maintain public order and combat any threat to security or extremism. It apparently seeks to arm the Bihar Military Police, rename them, and empower it on the lines of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).
- The Opposition has termed the Bill "draconian and unconstitutional" and an attempt by the government to enforce "Police Raj" in the State.
- Government says it will be for maintenance of public order, combating extremism, ensuring the better protection and security of specified establishments.

## HEALTHCARE

### INDIA TB REPORT



**Date:** 25th March 2021

#### Key Highlights:

- According to the India TB report recently released by the Health Ministry, – in 2020, there were 18.05 tuberculosis notifications, which was a fall of 24% from 2019 due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic.
- Between January and February 2020, there were 6% more cases reported than in 2019.
- As a result of the lockdown, notifications in the public sector fell by 38% and 44% in the private sector in April and May.
- Of the reported 24.04 lakh TB cases in 2019, treatment success was 82%, mortality rate was 4%.
- The approved budget toward the programme was decreased from ₹3,333 crores in 2019-20 to ₹3,110 crore in 2020-21.
- The report said 20,892 (42%) of patients were initiated on a shorter MDR-TB regimen at the time of diagnosis.
- This is a significant decline from 2019.

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

### INDEX MONITORING CELL (IMC)



**Date:** 26th March 2021

#### Key Highlights:

- Recently, Independent journalist P. Sainath struck a dissenting note in the report submitted by the Index Monitoring Cell (IMC).

- He pointed out that the right to dissent should be the central focus of press freedom.
- IMC was set up by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry with the objective to improve India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index and to evolve an objective yardstick to gauge media freedom.
- Recommendations of report:
  - Decriminalising of defamation. India is one of the few countries in the world to criminalise defamation.
  - Consent of the Press Council of India is a prerequisite before filing an FIR against the media or a publication.
  - Sainath has pointed out that the report failed in its objective to analyse the World Press Freedom Index and India's performance in it with a view to identify areas of strengths and concern related to press freedom in India.

## INTERNATIONAL

### INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

#### SANCTIONS IMPOSED ON CHINA FOR UIGHUR ABUSE



**Date:** 25th March 2021

#### **Key Highlights:**

- The European Union, USA, Britain, and Canada imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and entities, for human rights abuses against Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang province.
- The sanctions from EU, UK and Canada include travel bans and freezing of assets.
- It is significant that the Western powers moved together.
- This is the first time the EU has imposed sanctions on China since an arms embargo after the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.
- EU sanctions show a hardening of stance against its largest trading partner. Also

- China has consistently denied all reports of atrocities against Uighurs, maintaining it is only “deradicalizing” elements of its population in the interests of security.

## TRANSPORT

### BLOCKAGE OF SUEZ CANAL



**Date:** 26th March 2021

#### **Key Highlights:**

- A large cargo ship named ‘Ever Given’ got stuck near the southern end of the Suez Canal due to a mishap caused by bad weather. This is causing a huge jam of vessels at either end of the vital international trade artery.
- The Suez Canal is an artificial sea-level waterway running north to south across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt, to connect the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.
- The canal separates the African continent from Asia.
- It provides the shortest maritime route between Europe and the lands lying around the Indian and western Pacific oceans.
- It is one of the world’s most heavily used shipping lanes, carrying over 12% of world trade by volume.





# IDEAS

## NATIONAL

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

#### PRANIT E-TENDERING PORTAL



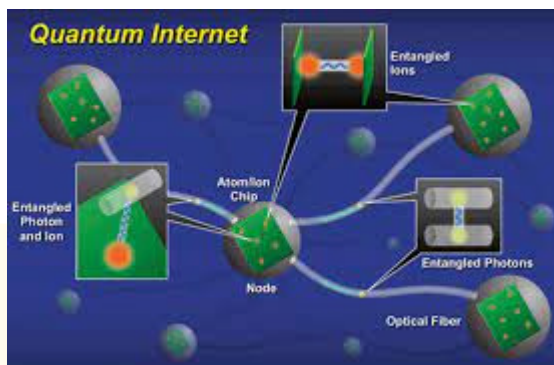
**Date:** 24th March 2021

#### Key Features:

- The Power Grid Corporation of India has launched an e-Tendering Portal called PRANIT.
- The PRANIT portal will support fewer paperwork activities, ease of operation and will offer more transparency in the tender application process.
- The portal is certified by the Standardisation, Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Because of this portal, the Power Grid Corporation of India has become the only organization of the country to have an eProcurement solution on SAP Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), which will thus enhance data security and operational transparency.

### SPACE

#### FREE-SPACE QUANTUM COMMUNICATION



**Date:** 24th March 2021

## Key Features:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully demonstrated its Free-Space Quantum Communication over a distance of 300 meters.
- The demonstration took place at the Space Applications Centre (SAC) in Ahmedabad in between the two line-of-sight buildings within its campus.
- The demonstration was conducted at night to avoid interference from direct sunlight.
- The experts performed a demonstration using quantum-key-encrypted signals.
- As per ISRO, this is thus the major achievement for unconditionally secured satellite data communication using quantum technologies.
- The space quantum communication consists of NAVIC receiver for the time synchronisation in between the transmitter and receiver modules, gimbal mechanism system to have an optical alignment.

## ENVIRONMENT

### CLIMATE DATA SERVICE PORTAL

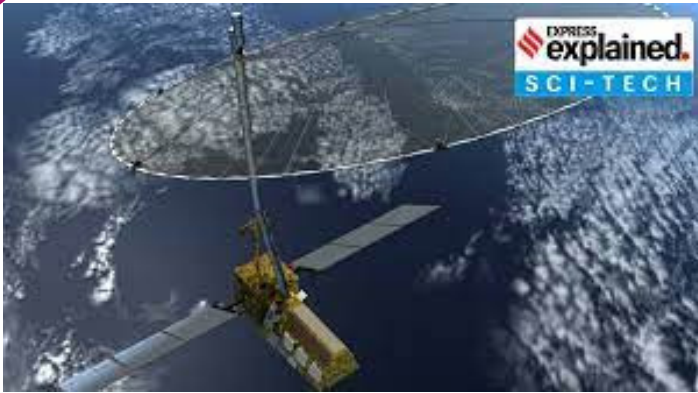


**Date:** 26th March 2021

## Key Features:

- Climate Data Services Portal of India Meteorological Department (IMD) was inaugurated on World Meteorological Day by the Ministry of Earth Science.
- The portal has been developed by the IMD, Pune.
- It has user-friendly platforms for climate data management and supply to the users.
- It complements a fully automated climate data management process.

### NISAR: JOINT EARTH OBSERVING MISSION OF NASA AND ISRO



**Date:** 30th March 2021

#### Key Features:

- NASA and ISRO are collaborating on developing an SUV-sized satellite called NISAR, which will detect movements of the planet's surface as small as 0.4 inches over areas about half the size of a tennis court.
- The satellite will be launched in 2022 from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh) into a near-polar orbit.
- The Name 'NISAR': The name NISAR is short for NASA-ISRO-SAR.
- SAR here refers to the Synthetic Aperture Radar that NASA will use to measure changes in the surface of the Earth.
- It refers to a technique for producing high-resolution images. Because of the precision, the radar can penetrate clouds and darkness, which means that it can collect data day and night in any weather.

### ASTEROID APOPHIS



**Date:** 31st March 2021

## Key Features:

- Recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has ruled out the possibility of the dreaded asteroid Apophis causing any damage to the Earth for the next 100 years.
- Apophis is a near-Earth asteroid with a relatively large size (about 335 meters wide).
- Named after the ancient Egyptian god of chaos and darkness, it was discovered in 2004, after which NASA had said that it was one of the asteroids that posed the greatest threat to Earth.
- Apophis was predicted to come threateningly close to us in the years 2029 and 2036, but NASA later ruled these events out.
- However, there were still fears about a possible collision in 2068.
- Recently, the asteroid flew past Earth on 5th March 2021, coming within 17 million km of our planet. During this approach, scientists used radar observations to study in detail the asteroid's orbit around the sun.



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