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INTERNATIONAL/WORLD NEWS

1. China surpasses United States as largest recipient of FDI

- According to a report released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),
- China overtook the United States to gain the top position in 2020. The country attracted \$163 billion inflows in 2020, compared to \$134 billion attracted by the United States.

2. 'Solidarity and Stability' deal : 41st Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- Recently, Gulf states signed a 'solidarity and stability' deal at the 41st Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit held in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia. In this deal, the members of the GCC removed all the sanctions over Qatar and re-open their land, sea and air borders to Qatar.
- Note : In June 2017, Saudi Arabia and its allies, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt severed ties with Qatar and imposed a naval, air and land blockade on the country.
- Qatar was charged to be too close to Iran and backed radical Islamist groups.
- **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE are the members of GCC (GCC was formed in 1981 and its Secretariat is located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.).**

3. Grand Renaissance Dam:

- This 145-meter-tall (475-foot-tall) hydropower project, started by Ethiopia is the cause of conflict between **Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt** .
- **Reason** : The dam is on the **Blue Nile river**, a tributary of the Nile river which carries about two-thirds of the river's water volume and most of the silt.

4. World Food Price Index: FAO

- The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index averaged 107.5 points in December 2020, up 2.3 points from November 2020.
- This marks the seventh month of consecutive increase.
- It was introduced in 1996 as a public good to help in monitoring developments in the global agricultural commodity markets.
- The FAO Food Price Index (FFPI) is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities.
- It measures changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar.
- Base Period: 2014-16.

5. China's Rising Influence in South Asia

- China has held its **third multilateral dialogue** virtually with countries from South Asia to take forward closer cooperation on fighting Covid-19 and coordinating their economic agendas, reflecting a new approach in Beijing's outreach to the region.
- It brought together every country in the region **except India, Bhutan and the Maldives**, and was aimed at "anti-epidemic cooperation and poverty reduction cooperation".
- The recent meeting was attended by all five countries that have taken part in these dialogues: **Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh**.
- All three dialogues have been attended by Pakistan and Nepal.

6. India at UNSC

- India, for the **eighth time**, has entered the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a **non-permanent member** recently. It will stay on the council for **two years** i.e 2021-22.

7. USA Vs Cuba

- Recently, the USA State Department has designated Cuba as a **State Sponsor of Terrorism** for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbour to terrorists.
- Now total four countries are on this list State Sponsor of Terrorism : **Syria, Iran, North Korea and Cuba**.
- Cuba was delisted in 2015 and has been blacklisted again.

8. Impeachment of the US President

- Donald Trump has become the first President of the USA in history to be impeached twice by the House of Representatives. He was charged for inciting an insurrection.

9. Kashmir Debate in UK's Parliament

- Recently, India has expressed its concern over a debate on Kashmir in the Houses of Parliament complex in London. A debate was titled "**Political situation in Kashmir**".
- The terminology used in the debate was problematic, regarding the reference to '**Kashmir**' in the title - there is a need to differentiate between the **Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir**, which is an integral part of India, and **Pakistan Occupied Kashmir** (when the erstwhile princely state of Kashmir legally acceded to India in October 1947, this part was forcibly and illegally occupied by Pakistan).
- NOTE : Earlier in October 2020 a delegation of European Union Members of Parliament (MEPs), comprising 27 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from Italy, Britain, France, Germany, Czech Republic, and Poland, visited Srinagar, nearly three months after the revocation of Article 370.

10. Open Skies Treaty : Russia quits

- Recently, **Russia pulled out** of the Open Skies Treaty (OST) citing **earlier withdrawal of the USA** from the treaty.
- **What is OST** : It was first proposed by USA in 1955 to deescalate tensions during the Cold War.
- This treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union. It finally **came into effect in 2002**.
- **Terms of OST** : Open surveillance: Under the treaty, a member State can undertake surveillance on any part of the host nation, with the latter's consent.
- Only approved imaging equipment is permitted on the surveillance flights.
- Officials from the host state can also stay on board throughout the planned journey.
- Sharing strategic information: The information gathered, such as on troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments, has to be shared with all member States.
- Both US and Russia were signatories of the treaty.
- India is not a member of this treaty.

11. Russia Agrees To Extend START Treaty

- Recently, Russia approved the extension of the New START treaty. It is the **last remaining nuclear Russia-USA arms control treaty** which is about to expire in February 2021.
- Both houses of Russian Parliament (Kremlin) approved the extension of the New START treaty for **five years**.
- The pact's extension doesn't require congressional approval in the USA, but Russian lawmakers must ratify the move and its President has to sign the relevant Bill into law.

The New START Treaty:

- It is a treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on measures for the further reduction and limitation of **strategic offensive arms**. The term 'strategic offensive arms' applies to nuclear warheads deployed by Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles ('SNDVs').
- **SNDVs** are **Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles** ('ICBMs') with a range exceeding 5,500 kilometres, strategic bombers, warships (including strategic submarines) and cruise missiles, including air and sea-launched cruise missiles.
- **Enforcement**: New START treaty came into force on **5th February, 2011**. It has **replaced the 1991 START I treaty**, which expired in December 2009.

12. Semeru Volcano : Java

- Recently, Semeru volcano erupted in **Indonesia's East Java province**. Other volcanoes, such as the Merapi volcano (Java) and Sinabung volcano (Sumatra), also erupted recently.
- **Semeru** - also known as "**The Great Mountain**" - is the highest volcano in Java and one of the most active. It previously erupted in December, 2019.
- Indonesia, with the **maximum number of active volcanoes in the world**, is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific's Ring of Fire.

13. GI Tag for Pakistani Basmati

- Recently, Pakistan received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for its Basmati rice under its Geographical Indications Act 2020.
- Pakistan is fighting a case in the European Union (EU) against India's move to get Basmati Rice as its product.

14. U.S. Congress passes 'Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act'

- It aims to increase the number of scholarships for Pakistani women in higher education under merit and needs-based programme.

15. Indonesian Jetliner crashes into the sea after takeoff

- **Boeing 737-500**, a passenger plane of Indonesia's Sriwijaya Air carrying 62 people on board crashed into waters off Jakarta.

NATIONAL

1. India in GAVI Board

- Recently, the **Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare** has been nominated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) as a member on GAVI board.
- The minister will be representing the South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board.
- The seat is currently held by **Myanmar** and India will be holding it from **1st January 2021** to 31st December 2023.
- **GAVI** : Created in 2000, It is an international organisation which brings together public and private sectors with the shared goal of creating equal access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries..
- NOTE : Earlier in May 2020, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare was also elected as the Chair of the World Health Organization's Executive Board.

2. GHTC- India

- The Prime Minister has laid the foundation of LightHouse Projects (LHPs), as part of the Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India) initiative, at **six sites** across **six states** via videoconference.
- Global Housing Technology Challenge-India:
- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has conceptualized a Global Housing Technology Challenge - India (GHTC- India) which **aims to identify and mainstream a basket of innovative technologies** from across the globe **for the housing construction sector that are sustainable, eco-friendly and disaster-resilient**.
- The Prime Minister declared the year **2019-20** as '**Construction Technology Year**' while inaugurating GHTC-India in **March 2019**.
- Six LHPs consisting of about 1,000 houses each with physical & social infrastructure facilities are being constructed at six places across the country namely Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).
- These projects will showcase the use of the six distinct shortlisted innovative technologies for field level application, learning and replication.
- LHPs will demonstrate and deliver ready to live mass housing at an expedited pace as compared to conventional brick and mortar construction and will be more economical, sustainable, of high quality and durability.

3. Draft of National Science Technology and Innovation Policy, 2020

- Recently, the draft of the **5th National Science Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP)** has been uploaded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) on its website.
- This Policy will **replace the Science Technology and Innovation Policy of 2013**.

4. School Bag Policy 2020

- The Directorate of Education has issued a circular asking schools to follow the new 'School Bag Policy, 2020' released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- According to this circular, the School teachers should inform the students in advance about the books and notebooks to be brought to school on a particular day and frequently check their bags to ensure that they are not carrying unnecessary material.
- It is the duty and the responsibility of the school management to provide quality potable water in sufficient quantities to all the students in the school so that they do not need to carry water bottles from their homes.
- **School Bag Policy 2020:**
- It lays down the guidelines on homework and weight of school bags for classes I to XII.
- School bags should not be more than 10% of the bodyweight of students across classes I to X and there should be no bags in pre-primary students.
- It recommends no homework up to class II and a maximum of two hours per week for classes III to V, one hour a day for classes VI to VIII and two hours a day for classes IX and above.
- The Policy will also require schools to introduce infrastructural changes as students will not be able to carry many books daily.
- The schools need to provide lockers right from preschool to senior secondary to enable children to leave books in school and carry home only what is required.
- It adds that the teachers should take the responsibility of checking the weight of school bags of the students every three months on a day selected for the whole class and any information about heavy bags should be communicated to the parents.
- It adds that files and thin/light exercise books should be preferred to thick/heavy ones.
- **Note** : The heavy school bag has severe/adverse physical effects on growing children which can cause damage to their vertebral column and knees.

5. Drug Addiction

- Recently, people in a few villages of Jodhpur district's Bilara block, Rajasthan have come together to tackle Drug Addiction among the youth.

Steps Taken By the Villagers:

- Boycott of persons consuming liquor, tobacco and narcotics.
- Imposition of a penalty on the sellers and buyers of these substances.
- **DRUG MENACE** : The menace of drug addiction has spread fast among the youth of India.
- India is sandwiched between two largest Opium producing regions of the world that is the Golden triangle on one side and the Golden crescent on other.
- The **golden triangle** area comprises Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos.
- The **golden crescent** area includes Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

6. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has launched Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 3.0, in a bid to empower India's youth with employable skills by making over 300 skill courses available to them.
- NOTE : Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) - was launched on 15th July, 2015 (World Youth Skills Day).

7. Rare Diseases : crowdfunding

- Recently, the **Delhi** High Court has ordered the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to explore Crowdfunding to help two children, who are suffering from a Rare Disease known as **Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy**.
- The HC held that 'Right to Health and Healthcare' is a fundamental right which has been recognised by the Supreme Court to be a part of the 'Right to life' under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Note** : Donation-based crowdfunding is a way to source money for a project by asking a large number of contributors to individually donate a small amount to it.

- A **rare disease** is a health condition of low prevalence that affects a small number of people compared with other prevalent diseases in the general population.
- **Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD)** is a **genetic disorder** characterized by progressive muscle degeneration and weakness due to the alterations of a **protein** called dystrophin that helps keep muscle cells intact.

8. Ratle Hydro Electric Project

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for 850 MegaWatt (MW) Ratle hydropower project on **Chenab** river in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Pakistan government in 2013 had objected to the construction of the dam, claiming that it was not in conformity with the Indus Water Treaty.
- In August 2017, the World Bank allowed India to construct the dam.
- Pakistan has approached the World Bank with fresh protests, but the Centre has now decided to go ahead with the construction.

9. ShramShakti Portal

- Recently, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Arjun Munda) has launched “ShramShakti”- a **National Migration Support Portal**, to smooth the formulation of state and national level programs for migrant workers.
- A training manual “**ShramSaathi**” was also launched for migrant workers.
- It has been launched to collect data related to tribal migrant workers and **link them with the existing welfare schemes**.

10 . Fifty Years of India Bangladesh Relations

- Commemorating 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh, a 122-member **contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces** has recently **participated in the 72nd Republic Day parade**.
- This year, India and Bangladesh are also celebrating 50 years of the establishment of their ties.
- This is the **third time** the Republic Day parade in India has witnessed the participation of a military contingent from abroad. Previously **French troops** marched in **2016** and **UAE troops** in **2017**.
- Bangladesh War of Independence: Vijay Diwas is observed on 16th December every year to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war.

11. Agreement With IEA

- India has inked a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the International Energy Agency (IEA) to strengthen cooperation in global energy security, stability and sustainability.
International Energy Agency
- Established: In **1974** as per framework of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). IEA is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation.
- Headquarter (Secretariat): **Paris** (France).
- **Members:** It has **30** members at present (**India is not a member.**)
- A candidate country must be a member country of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members.

12. Kala Utsav 2020

- Recently, Kala Utsav 2020 - an annual function to promote arts in education, was organised by the Ministry of Education.
- This programme was initiated under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), which has now been merged with other schemes under ‘Samagra Shiksha – an integrated scheme for school education’.

13. Toycathon-2021

- The Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ and Union Minister WCD and Textiles Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani jointly launched Toycathon-2021 and the Toycathon Portal.
- Toycathon is being organized to develop India as the global Toy manufacturing hub.

14. 'SAKSHAM' campaign :

- It is a mass awareness campaign **by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas** to spread awareness about **green and clean energy**.
- SAKSHAM stands for *Sanrakshan Kshamata Mahotsav*.

15. India's first COVID-19 Vaccine recipient is Manish Kumar

- Manish Kumar, a sanitation worker in Delhi, became the first person to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in India after PM Modi flagged off the nationwide vaccination drive on 16 January 2021.

16. Union minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurates First National Road Safety Month 2021

- Duration : 16 Jan 2021 to 17 Feb 2021.
- The objective of the month-long programme is to build awareness about road safety and reduce road accidents in India.

17. India's 1st Labour Movement Museum to be set up in Alappuzha , Kerala

- The museum will portray the growth of the world labour movement and the history of Kerala's labour movement, through pictures, documents and other exhibits.

18. Bhawana Kanth : 1st woman fighter pilot at R-Day parade

- Note : she belongs to Darbhanga, Bihar.

19. Howrah-Kalka Mail Renamed as "Netaji Express"

- It is believed that Netaji Subash Chandra Bose took this train from Bihar's Gomoh after escaping from his house in Kolkata in the year 1941.

20. India's "Vaccine Maitri" Initiative begins

- It aims to gift COVID-19 vaccines to neighbouring countries.

21. "e-EPIC"

- Election Commission rolls out digital voter ID cards "e-EPIC" which can be stored on mobile phones and downloaded on personal computers.

22. No foreign leader as chief guest on Republic Day this year

- President Ramnath Kovind took the salute at the parade this time.
- This was the **first time in over five decades** that India did not have a chief guest at the Republic Day parade.
- Note : Earlier, **United Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Boris Johnson** was scheduled to attend Republic day parade as a chief guest but he cancelled his visit due to outbreak of mutant strain of Covid 19 in UK.
- Later, Indian Origin President of the Republic of Suriname, **Chandrikapersad Santokhi**, was likely to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day parade on January 26, but his plans did not materialise due to same issues. **Santokhi was the chief guest at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2021.**

23. 51st International Film Festival of India

- Venue : Shyamaprasad Stadium near Panaji in Goa.
- Time period : 16th January-24th January
- Important facts :
- Opened with the movie '**Another Round**' by Thomas Vinterberg (This movie is also Denmark's official entry to the Oscars).
- The festival also witnessed the World Premiere of '**Mehrunisa**' (a film by Sandeep Kumar).
- The festival closed with the India Premiere of the historical drama 'Wife of a Spy' by Kiyoshi Kurosawa.
- The 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) celebrated the works of legendary filmmaker **Satyajit Ray** by screening five of his classics.
- **Bangladesh was a country of focus** at the festival. Four films of Bangladesh was included in 'country of focus' section.

- The winners of the IFFI awards are listed below:
- Golden Peacock Award for Best Film: **Into the Darkness**
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor (Male): **Tzu-Chuan Liu**, The Silent Forest
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor (Female): **Zofia Stafiej**, I Never Cry
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Director: Chen-Nien Ko, The Silent Forest
- Best Debut Director Award: Cássio Pereira dos Santos, Valentina
- Special Mention Award: Kripal Kalita, Bridge
- Special Jury Award: Kamin Kalev, February
- ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Award: Ameen Nayfeh's 200 Meters
- Indian Personality of the Year Award: **Biswajit Chatterjee**
- Lifetime Achievement award : Vittorio Storaro (Italian cinematographer).

INDIAN SOCIETY

1. Sentinelese tribe

- Recently, the Anthropological Survey of India (ANSI) policy document warned of threat to the Sentinelese from commercial activity.
- **Note** : two years ago, an American national **John Allen Chau** was allegedly killed by the Sentinelese on the North Sentinel Island.
- The Sentinelese are a **pre-neolithic, negrito tribe** who live in **North Sentinel Island of the Andamans**.
- They are completely isolated with no contact to the outside world. The first time they were contacted by a team of Indian anthropologists in 1991.
- It has an estimated population of about 50 to 100 on the North Sentinel Island.
- Surveys of North Sentinel Island have not found any evidence of agriculture. Instead, the community seems to be hunter-gatherers, getting food through fishing, hunting, and collecting wild plants living on the island.
- Sentinelese are also listed under **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** by the government of India. The **other four PVTGs** of the islands are **Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, and Shompens**.
- They are protected under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956.
- **Anthropological Survey of India**, : established in 1945, it is a premier research institute for anthropological research in bio-cultural studies. It is headquartered at **Kolkata** and falls under **Ministry of Culture**.

2. KERALA'S Digital Media Literacy PROGRAMME : Satyameva Jayate:

- The Kerala Government has recently announced a digital media literacy programme called 'Satyameva Jayate' (Truth alone triumphs) to counter the menace of **Fake News**.
- **What is fake news** : Fake news is untrue information presented as news. It often has the aim of damaging the reputation of a person or entity, or making money through advertising revenue.

3. 24th Hunar Haat

- 24th "Hunar Haat" is being organized in **Lucknow** (Uttar Pradesh) from 22nd January to 04th February, 2021.
- Hunar Haat is an exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products made by artisans from the minority communities.
- **Theme: Vocal for Local.**
- **Organizer:** These are organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under **USTTAD** (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.
- The USTTAD scheme aims to promote and preserve the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the minority communities.
- These Haat aims to provide market exposure and employment opportunities to artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.

DEFENCE NEWS

1. Operation 'Sard Hawa'

- The Operations launched by BSF at Rajasthan border to check the instances of infiltration due to the dense fog cover in the region and increase security on the border areas in Jaisalmer.

2. AMPHEX – 21

- A large-scale tri-service joint amphibious exercise AMPHEX – 21 was held in Andaman & Nicobar group of islands. The exercise involved the participation of troops of Army, Navy as well as the Indian Air Force.

3 Defence Exports : Akash

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved export of the Akash surface-to-air missile to “friendly countries” and constituted a committee, headed by the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, for faster approval of export of defence platforms.
- This committee would authorise subsequent export of major indigenous platforms to various countries.
- The export version of Akash, will be different from the system currently deployed with the Indian armed forces.

Is it first time that India is exporting any defence good ?

- No, So far, Indian defence exports included parts/components etc. The export of big platforms was minimal. This initiative of the Cabinet would help the country improve its defence products and make them globally competitive.
- It would be a significant step under **Atma Nirbhar Bharat**.

Imp facts about Akash Missile

- Designed and developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Akash is India's first indigenously produced medium range **Surface to Air** missile that can engage multiple targets from multiple directions.
- The nuclear-capable missile can fly at a speed of up to **Mach 2.5** (nearly 860 meter per second) at a maximum height of 18 km.
- This all-weather missile can strike enemy aerial targets like fighter jets, drones, cruise missiles, air-to-surface missiles as well as ballistic missiles from a distance of **30 km**.
- The missile is unique in the way that it can be launched from mobile platforms like **battle tanks or wheeled trucks**. It has nearly 90% kill probability.
- The missile is supported by the indigenously developed radar called '**Rajendra**' that can handle highly-maneuvring multiple targets from multiple directions in group or autonomous mode.
- The Akash missile system has been designed and developed as part of India's Integrated guided-missile development programme' (**IGMDP**) which started in 1982–83 under the leadership of **Abdul Kalam**. (IGMDP also includes other missiles like **Nag, Agni, Trishul and Prithvi**).

4. Sea Vigil 21

- The second edition of the biennial pan-India **coastal defence exercise** 'Sea Vigil-21' has started.
- The inaugural edition of the exercise was conducted in January 2019. It **India's largest coastal defence drill**.
- The 2021 exercise is being undertaken along the entire 7516 km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone of India (200 nautical miles from shore).
- It involves all the **13 coastal States** and Union Territories along with other maritime stakeholders, including the fishing and coastal communities.

5. UAV (Drone) Procurement

- The Indian Army has placed an order for the advanced high-altitude version of SWITCH UAV (a vertical take-off and landing drone) from **ideaForge** for USD 20 million.
- **ideaForge is a start-up** founded and incubated by the alumni of Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-B).
- **UAV stands for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle**

6. Desert Knight-21

- bilateral Air exercise between Indian Air Force (IAF) and French Air and Space Force.
- **Venue : Air Force Station Jodhpur.**
- The exercise is unique as it includes fielding of Rafale aircraft by both sides and is indicative of the growing interaction between the two premier Air Forces.

Defence Exercises between India and France:

- Varuna – Naval exercise
- Garuda – Air exercise
- Shakti – Army exercise

Note: Other exercises sounding similar names

- **Gagan Shakti** is conducted by the Indian Air Force to showcase its air dominance over the entire extended area of the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Garuda Shakti** is the joint military exercise between **India and Indonesia.**
- **Mitra Shakti** is the joint military exercise between **India and Sri Lanka.**

7. S-400 Triumph Missile System

- The first group of Indian military specialists are scheduled to depart for Moscow (Russia) soon to undergo training courses on the S-400 Triumph missile defence system.
- In October 2018, India signed a 5.43 billion USD deal with Russia for the S-400 Triumph missile system despite objections from the US and the threat of sanctions under Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

S-400 Triumph Missile System :

- The S-400 Triumph is a mobile, **surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.** It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).
- The system can engage all types of aerial targets including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and ballistic and cruise missiles within the range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km.
- The system can **track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously.**

Note : China is also buying the system. In 2015, China signed an agreement with Russia to purchase six battalions of the system. Its delivery began in January 2018.

8. Shaheen-III Missile

- Recently, Pakistan has successfully test-fired the Shaheen-III missile.
- It is a nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile which can strike targets up to 2,750 km.
- Eagle-IX (or Shaheen-IX) military exercise : between the Chinese and Pakistani air forces.

9. Fatah-1 : Pakistan successfully test-fires indigenously developed **Guided Multi Launch Rocket System**, Fatah-1.

10. Sagar Anveshika

- It is a **Coastal Research Vessel** launched at the **Chennai Port.**
- The vehicle will be used to carry out **environment indexing and bathymetric** (mapping underwater features) in both coastal and offshore waters.

11. Rakshita : Motor Bike Ambulance

- DRDO has handed over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The bike ambulances will provide life-saving aid for the evacuation of injured patients from low-intensity conflict areas.

INDIAN ECONOMY

1. RoDTEP Scheme

- Recently, the Government has decided to extend the benefit of the Scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) to all export goods.

- RoDTEP scheme was announced in 2020 as a replacement for the **Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS)**.
- **Note** : WTO declared MEIS inconsistent with the rules of WTO after a complaint filed by US)
- The RoDTEP scheme would refund to exporters the embedded central, state and local duties or taxes, which will make the export sector competitive (boost the export sector of the country).

2. Digital Payments Index: RBI

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.
- The RBI-DPI comprises 5 broad parameters that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods.
- It has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period.
- It will be published on RBI's website on a semi-annual basis from March 2021 onwards with a lag of 4 months.

3. Japan Provides Loan to India

- India and Japan signed an agreement for a loan of up to 50 billion yen (about Rs. 3,550 crore) to back India's economic support programmes for the poor and vulnerable affected by the Covid-19 crisis. It is a part of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan.
- ODA is defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Loans and credits for military purposes are excluded.
- The loan has an interest rate of 0.65% per annum and a repayment period of 15 years, including a five-year grace period.

4. India's Trade Deficit with China : 5 year's low

- The trade deficit, between India and China, declined to a five year-low of 45.8 billion USD in 2020, the lowest since 2015.

5. Disinvestment : Pawan Hans

- Recently, the Ministry of Finance has extended the bidding deadlines for the strategic disinvestment of **Pawan Hans** by a month, citing logistical challenges faced by interested bidders due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Pawan Hans** Limited is a helicopter service company based in New Delhi. It is a **Mini Ratna-I category Public Sector Undertaking**.
- **Government's Disinvestment Target for 2020-2021**: Government plans to raise **Rs. 2.1 lakh crore** through disinvestment in 2020-21, with just about **Rs. 14,000 crore** raised so far through minority stake sales.
- **Disinvestment**
- Disinvestment means sale or liquidation of assets by the government, usually Central and state public sector enterprises, projects, or other fixed assets.
- The government undertakes disinvestment to reduce the fiscal burden on the exchequer, or to raise money for meeting specific needs, such as to bridge the revenue shortfall from other regular sources.
- **Strategic disinvestment** is the **transfer of the ownership and control of a public sector entity to some other entity** (mostly to a private sector entity). Unlike the simple disinvestment, strategic sale implies a kind of privatization.

6. Bad Bank

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor has agreed to look at a proposal for creating a Bad Bank.
- A bad bank conveys the impression that it will function as a bank but has bad assets to start with.
- Technically, a bad bank is an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) or an Asset Management Company (AMC) that takes over the bad loans of commercial banks, manages them and finally recovers the money over a period of time.
- The bad bank is not involved in lending and taking deposits, but helps commercial banks clean up their balance sheets and resolve bad loans.

7. Shadow Entrepreneurs

- There has been a global rise of shadow entrepreneurship, in various sectors such as education (certificates), finance (for easy loans), the betting economy (online games) and healthcare (e-pharmacies).
- Shadow entrepreneurs are individuals who manage a business that sells legitimate goods and services but they do not register their businesses.
- This means that they do not pay tax, operating in a shadow economy where business activities are performed outside the reach of government authorities.
- Types of businesses include unlicensed taxicab services, roadside food stalls and small landscaping operations.
- In a study of 68 countries, the **Imperial College Business School** found that **after Indonesia, India has the second highest rate of shadow entrepreneurs.**
- **Causes for Rise in Shadow entrepreneurs:** High tax rates accompanied by loose enforcement induces tax avoidance, discourage investment in formal businesses, and drive entrepreneurial activity toward the informal sector.

8. India Innovation Index 2020: released by NITI Aayog

- The Innovation Index is divided into three categories — major states, Union Territories, and hill and North East states.
- **Major States:** Karnataka topped with a score of 42.5 for the second year running. Bihar raked last with 14.5 points..
- **Hill and North-East States:** Himachal Pradesh topped the rankings of hill and North-East states, followed by Uttarakhand, Manipur and Sikkim.
- **Union territories/Small States:** Delhi has scored the highest on the index in the country with a score of 46.6, while Lakshadweep has the lowest score at 11.7.
- Delhi recorded the highest number of trademark and patent applications, along with the establishment of new start-ups and companies in the last financial year.

9. Legal Entity Identifier for NEFT, RTGS transactions above Rs 50 crore

- The Reserve Bank of India has introduced Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) for all payment transactions of value Rs 50 crore and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) via Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT).
- This instruction shall come into effect **from April 01, 2021.**
- The Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) is a **20-digit number** used to uniquely identify parties to financial transactions worldwide.

10. SMCB becomes India's 1st urban co-operative bank to transition to SFB

- Uttar Pradesh-based, Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank (SMCB) has become the first urban co-operative bank (UCB) in India to receive a licence from RBI to operate as a Small Finance Bank (SFB).
- The RBI had given an 18-month timeline to commence business.

POLITY (articles of Constitution of India in news)

1. Demand For Autonomy in Assam

- There has been a demand for implementation of Article **244A** for the creation of an autonomous State within Assam.
- The appeal to the Centre has been for the creation of an autonomous State for the Karbi Anglong region.
- This has been a demand since 1986.

2. Grounds for Contempt

- **Article 129** of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself.
- **Article 215** conferred a corresponding power on the **High Courts.**

ART AND CULTURE

1. Monpa Handmade Paper :

- Recently, the Monpa Handmade Paper (1000-year old heritage art) of Arunachal Pradesh has been **revived** by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- Monpa is a fine-textured handmade paper, which is called **Mon Shugu** in the local dialect. It is integral to the vibrant culture of the local tribes in **Tawang**.
- The paper has great historic and religious significance as it is the paper used for writing **Buddhist scriptures** and hymns in monasteries.
- The Monpa handmade paper is made from the bark of a local tree called **Shugu Sheng**, which has medicinal values too.
- **NOTE** : KVIC is a **statutory body** established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, **1956**. It functions under the Ministry of **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**.

2. Anubhava Mantapa

- Recently, the Chief Minister of Karnataka has laid the foundation stone for the '**New Anubhava Mantapa**' in **Basavakalyan**, (Karnataka) the place where **12th century poet-philosopher 'Basaveshwara'** lived for most of his life.
- **New Anubhava Mantapa** will be a six-floor structure in the midst of the 7.5-acre plot and represent various principles of Basaveshwara's philosophy. It will showcase the 12th Century Anubhava Mantapa (often referred to as the "**first Parliament of the world**") established by Basaveshwara in Basavakalyan where philosophers and social reformers held debates.
- **Note : Basaveshwara (1134-1168)** was an Indian philosopher, social reformer and statesman who attempted to create a casteless society and fought against caste and religious discrimination. The tradition of Lingayatism is known to have been founded by him.

3. World's Oldest Cave Art

- Recently, archaeologists have discovered the world's oldest known cave art which is a life-sized picture of a wild pig that was painted at least 45,500 years ago in Indonesia (Leang Tedongnge cave in a remote valley on the island of Sulawesi).

4. Risa: Tripura's Signature Garment

- The State government of Tripura aims to promote risa nationally as Tripura's signature garment.
- The risa is being branded under the India Handloom Brand. This supports the '**Vocal for Local**' initiative of the central government.
- Risa is a **handwoven cloth** used as a **female upper garment**. It is a part of traditional Tripuri attire.
- Adolescent Tripuri girls are first given a risa to wear in an event called **Risa Sormani**, at age 12 to 14.
- Risa is also used as a turban by men during weddings and festivals.

HISTORY

1. 203rd Anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon Battle (1818)

- The victory pillar (also known as Ranstambh or Jaystambh) in Bhima-Koregaon village (Pune district of Maharashtra) celebrated the 203rd anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon battle of 1818 on 1st January, 2021.
- A battle was fought in Bhima Koregaon between the Peshwa forces and the British on **1st January, 1818** (during Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817-18)).
- The British army, which comprised mainly of Dalit soldiers, fought the upper caste-dominated Peshwa army.
- The British troops defeated the Peshwa army.
- Peshwa Bajirao II had insulted the **Mahar** community and terminated them from the service of his army.
- This caused them to side with the English against the Peshwa's numerically superior army.
- The name **Mahar** is a group of many Marathi speaking endogamous castes, living chiefly in Maharashtra state and in adjoining states. They are **officially** designated **Scheduled Castes**.

- The defeat of Peshwa army was considered to be a victory against caste-based discrimination and oppression.
- Babasaheb Ambedkar's visit to the site on 1st January, 1927, revitalised the memory of the battle for the Dalit community, making it a rallying point and an assertion of pride.
- **The Victory Pillar Memorial:**
- It was erected by the British in Perne village in the district for the soldiers killed in the Koregaon Bhima battle. It has attained legendary stature in Dalit history.
- **Note** : In 2018, incidents of violent clashes between Dalit and Maratha groups were registered during the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon battle.

2. Parakram Diwas

- The central government has decided to observe **Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti** as '**Parakram Diwas**' to be celebrated on 23rd January.
- A high-level **committee headed by the Prime Minister** has also been formed to plan year-round programmes to mark the anniversary of Bose.
- Recently the Government of India has also instituted **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar** to recognise the excellent work done by the individuals and institutions in the field of disaster management.

3. Sree Narayana Guru

- The Vice President of India has virtually launched "**Not Many, But One**", an English translation of poems of Sree Narayana Gurudev.
- Sree Narayana Guru was born on 22nd August, 1856 in Kerala.
- His family belonged to the Ezhava caste and was considered 'avarna' according to the social mores of the time.
- From an early age, he was drawn towards asceticism. He lived as a hermit in a forest for eight years. He learned Vedas, Upanishads, literature, logical rhetoric of Sanskrit, Hatha Yoga and other philosophies.
- He gave the famous slogan "One Caste, One Religion, One God for All".

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Umed Paoni Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary

- **A** tigress and her two cubs were found dead in the Umed Paoni Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagpur, Maharashtra.
- **NOTE** : this Wildlife Sanctuary has a connection with Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve through forest along Wainganga river (a tributary of Godavari).

2. State of the Climate Report 2020: IMD

- According to the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s State of the Climate Report**, the year 2020 was the eighth warmest since India started keeping records in 1901.
- The State of the Climate Report looks at temperature and rainfall trends annually.
- During the year 2020, the annual average temperature in the country was 0.29 degree Celsius (°C) above normal (29-year average from 1981-2010).
- However, it was much lower than **2016** (+0.71 degrees Celsius), which **remains the warmest ever year** the country has recorded since 1901.
- **NOTE** : IMD was established in 1875. It is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India.

3. Indian Pangolin (Animal in news)

- Pangolins are scaly ant-eater mammals and they have large, protective keratin scales covering their skin. They are the only known mammals with this feature.
- Out of the eight species of pangolin, the Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) and the Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) are found in India.
- Indian Pangolin is widely distributed in India, except the arid region, high Himalayas and the North-East.

- The species is also found in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- Chinese Pangolin is found in the Himalayan foothills in Eastern Nepal, Bhutan, Northern India, North-East Bangladesh and through Southern China.
- Threats to Pangolins in India : Hunting and poaching
- They are believed to be the world's most trafficked mammal.

Conservation Status:

- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I
- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I

4. Caracal wild cat OR Caracal caracal - (Animal in news)

- It is a rare species in India. They are slender, medium-sized cats with long powerful legs and tufted ears.
- The black tufted ears of this **cat** are one of its most distinguishing features.
- It is shy, nocturnal, elusive and difficult to spot in the wild.
- **Habitat:** In India, presence of these Cats has been reported from only **three states** which are **Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan**.

Conservation Status :

- IUCN Red List: Least Concern
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I
- CITES: Appendix I

NOTE : Recently, the Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife (SC-NBWL) in its 60th meeting has **approved** for including Caracal, a medium sized wildcat into the list of **critically endangered species**.

5. Asian Houbara Bustard

- Recently, the Pakistan government has issued special permits to Dubai royal family members, allowing them to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard during the 2020-21 hunting season.
- Two distinct species of this bird is found in North Africa (*Chlamydotis undulata*) and Asia (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*).
- **IUCN Status** of Asian houbara bustard - **Vulnerable**

6. Dzukou Valley

- The two-week long forest fire in Dzukou valley on Nagaland-Manipur border has been doused.
- The 90-sq km green valley has been prone to forest fires for decades - in 2015, 2012, 2010 and 2006.
- The Dzukou Valley, popularly known as the '**valley of flower**', is located at the border of Nagaland and Manipur.
- Situated at an altitude of 2,438 metres behind the **Japfu** mountain range, it is one of the most popular trekking spots in the North East.
- Dzukou valley and Japfu peak are located adjacent to the **Pulie Badze Wildlife Sanctuary** (Nagaland).
- The valley is home to the **Angami** people.

7. Nagi-Nakti Bird Sanctuaries

- Recently, Bihar's first state-level bird festival '**Kalrav**' started at the Nagi-Nakti bird sanctuaries in the **Jamui district, Bihar**. It is a 3-day event and is expected to draw experts and bird lovers from all over the country.
- The Nagi Dam and Nakti Dam are two sanctuaries so close to each other that they can be taken as one bird area.

8. Indian Star Tortoise

- Recently, Indian star tortoises were seized while being smuggled from Andhra Pradesh to Odisha.
- Indian star tortoise is found across the **Indian sub-continent**, more specifically, in the Central and Southern parts of India, in West Pakistan and in Sri Lanka.
- It comes under the **Schedule IV** of Wild Life Protection Act 1972 (means not endangered but is a protected species and penalty for any violation is less compared to the Schedules I and II).
- IUCN Status: **Vulnerable**

9. Bandipur Tiger Reserve

- It was in news recently as a stranded wild elephant was rescued in Nugu reservoir, close to **Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka**.
- According to the **Tiger census 2018**, Karnataka has the second highest number of tigers in the country after Madhya Pradesh.

10. India's Draft Arctic Policy

- Recently, India drafted a new Arctic policy that aims at expanding scientific research, sustainable tourism and exploration of mineral oil and gas in the Arctic region.
- **Nodal Body**: India has designated **Goa-based National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research** to lead scientific research and act as a nodal body to coordinate among various scientific bodies to promote domestic scientific research capacities in the Arctic.
- **Main objectives** are Promoting Scientific Study of Arctic, Planning Explorations and Promoting Arctic Tourism

11. Green Tax

- Recently, the Centre announced its plans to impose a "green tax" on **older vehicles** in a move to disincentive the use of polluting vehicles and **to curb pollution** in the country.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will levy a green tax on transport vehicles **older than eight years** at the time of renewal of fitness certificate at the rate of 10% to 25% of road tax.
- The revenue collected through the green tax will be kept in a different account and will only be utilised for tackling pollution.
- **Exemption**: Vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles and those running on alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol and LPG and vehicles used in farming, such as tractor, harvesters and tillers **will be exempted**.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Lithium-ion Technology

- India, through a newly started state-owned company Khanij Bidesh India Ltd, has inked a pact with an Argentine firm to jointly prospect lithium in Argentina, a country that has the one of the largest reserves of Lithium in the world.
- Lithium is a crucial building block of the lithium-ion **rechargeable** batteries that power **electric vehicles (EVs), laptops and mobile phones**. Currently, India is heavily dependent on its import from China.
- **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd**: It was incorporated in August 2019 by three state-owned companies, NALCO, Hindustan Copper and Mineral Exploration Ltd, with a specific mandate to acquire strategic mineral assets such as lithium and cobalt abroad.

2. Capping on the amount of Trans Fatty Acids

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has capped the amount of trans fatty acids (TFA) in oils and fats to 3% for 2021 and 2% by 2022 from the current permissible limit of 5% through an amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations 2011. Previously it was in 2011 that India first passed a regulation that set a TFA limit of 10% in oils and fats, which was further reduced to 5% in 2015.
- As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), approximately 5.4 lakh deaths take place each year globally because of intake of industrially produced trans fatty acids.
- Trans fats are largely produced artificially but a small amount also occurs naturally. Thus in our diet, these may be present as **Artificial TFAs and/ or Natural TFAs**.
- TFAs pose a higher risk of **heart disease** than saturated fats. While saturated fats raise total cholesterol levels, TFAs not only raise total cholesterol levels but also reduce the good cholesterol (HDL), which helps to protect us against heart disease.
- It is also associated with a higher risk of **developing obesity, type 2 diabetes**, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, infertility, certain types of cancers and can also lead to compromised fetal development causing harm to the yet to be born baby.

3. Bird Flu Threat

- Hundreds of **crows** have died in **Rajasthan** prompting authorities to sound a bird flu alert in the state.
- Bird flu, also known as **Avian influenza (AI)**, is a highly contagious viral disease affecting several species of food-producing birds (chickens, turkeys, quails, guinea fowl, etc.) as well as pet birds and wild birds.
- Occasionally mammals, including humans, may contract avian influenza.
- Influenza viruses are grouped into three types; A, B, and C. **Only** type A is known to infect animals and is zoonotic, meaning it can infect animals and also humans. **Type B and C mostly infect humans** and typically cause mild disease.
- Avian influenza virus subtypes include A(H5N1), A(H7N9), and A(H9N2).
- **H5N1** is especially deadly for poultry.

4. Banana Grit

- Recently, scientists at the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST) at Pappanamcode in **Kerala** have come up with a new product, Banana Grit or Granules, developed from raw **Nendran** bananas.
- The concept was introduced to utilise the presence of resistant starch in bananas.
- NOTE : The Chengalikodan Nendran banana grown in Kerala got Geographical indication (GI) Tag in 2014.

5. Quantum Technology

- The detailed project report for a National Mission on Quantum Technology and Applications (NMQTA) has been drawn out and finalised.
- Union Budget 2020-21 proposed to spend **Rs 8,000 crore** on the newly launched NMQTA.

6. MukundPura CM2 Meteorite

- A recent study has revealed that the meteorite named Mukundpura CM2 which fell in Mukundpura village near Jaipur in 2017 is a carbonaceous chondrite. The composition of carbonaceous chondrites are also similar to the Sun.

7. Lithium resource

- Recent surveys by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD) have shown the presence of lithium resources in **Mandya** district, Karnataka.
- AMD is the oldest unit of the Department of Atomic Energy.

8. Domestic Vanadium Deposits

- A recent exploration by Geological Survey of India (GSI) has found reserves of Vanadium in Arunachal Pradesh. This is the first report of a primary deposit of vanadium in India.
- GSI is an attached office to the Ministry of Mines.
- Vanadium is a chemical element with the symbol V.
- The largest deposits of Vanadium are in China, followed by Russia and South Africa respectively.

Uses :

- Vanadium is used primarily as an alloying element in the Iron & Steel Industry and to some extent as a stabiliser in titanium and aluminium alloys used in the aerospace Industry.
- Modern applications of vanadium include its use as vanadium secondary batteries for power plants and rechargeable Vanadium Redox Battery (VRB) for commercial applications.
- Vanadium alloys are used in nuclear reactors because of vanadium's low neutron-absorbing properties.

9. Lumpy Skin Disease

- Recently, a Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) has been infecting India's bovines. The disease is being reported for the **first time** in India.
- The LSD is caused by infection of cattle or water buffalo with the **poxvirus Lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV)**.

10. LCA Tejas

- The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has recently cleared a deal worth Rs. 48,000 crore for the acquisition of 83 Tejas Light Combat Aircraft for the Indian Air Force.

- Note : **CCS is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.**
- It is manufactured by State-owned **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).**
- Tejas is **lightest, smallest** and tailless multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.
- It has **Air to air refuelling capability** and maximum payload capacity of 4000 kg.
- It can attend the maximum speed of **Mach 1.8** and the range of the aircraft is 3,000km

11. ASMI: Pistol

- India's first indigenous 9mm Machine Pistol has been jointly developed by Infantry School, Mhow and DRDO's Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE), Pune.
- Machine pistols are primarily self-loading versions of pistols which are either fully automatic or can also fire bursts of bullets.
- The Pistol is named "**Asmi**" meaning "Pride", "Self-Respect" & "Hard Work".

12. 1G Ethanol

- Recently, the Department of Food & Public Distribution has notified a modified scheme for extending financial assistance for producing 1st Generation (1G) ethanol.
- The aim is to achieve **blending targets of ethanol with petrol** (Ethanol Blending Programme).
- **Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP):**
- Aim: It aims at blending ethanol with petrol, thereby bringing it under the category of biofuels and saving millions of dollars by cutting fuel imports and decreasing carbon emissions.
- **Target:** The target is to achieve **20% blending** of ethanol **by 2025.**

13. Doppler Weather Radars

- Recently, the Union Minister for Earth Sciences commissioned two of the ten indigenously built X-Band Doppler Weather Radars (DWR) which will closely monitor the weather changes over the Himalayas.
- A multi-mission meteorological data receiving and processing system developed in collaboration with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was also launched.
- This new system will capture, process and make available for use satellite data within **seven minutes** as opposed to 20 minutes taken by earlier systems.
- The DWR has been **designed and developed by ISRO** and **manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**, Bengaluru.
- **Significance:**
- Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh are highly prone to cloud bursts, landslides, heavy rain and snowfall. Timely weather forecasts and warnings would ensure the governments make advance plans and initiate rescue measures.

14. Smart Anti Airfield Weapon (SAAW)

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has conducted a successful trial of the indigenously developed Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) off the Odisha coast from the Hawk-I jet of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). This was the ninth successful test of the system conducted over the last five years.
- The system belongs to the glide bomb category and its development began around 2012-13, with crucial inputs from the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the first test was carried out in 2016.
- It is manufactured by: **DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) Hyderabad.**
- The weapon is designed to strike ground targets, especially adversary airfield infrastructure or similar strategically important installations.
- This is a 125-kilogram class smart weapon, capable of engaging ground enemy airfield assets such as radars, bunkers, taxi tracks, and runways, up to a **range of 100 kilometres.**

15. Co-WIN App

- Recently, the software of Co-WIN App (also called Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network) was upgraded to improve monitoring and managing of the ongoing Covid-19 Vaccination programme.

16. SpaceX breaks ISRO's Record by launching 143 Satellites

- SpaceX successfully launched its ambitious rideshare mission called Transporter-1, carrying 143 small satellites, and created a new record of launching many satellites from a single rocket.
- With this launch, SpaceX broke the record set by ISRO in February 2017 for deploying 104 satellites onboard PSLV in a single mission.
- SpaceX founder & CEO: Elon Musk.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. DRDO Celebrates 63rd Foundation Day on 1st January 2021

DRDO - Chairman: Dr G Satheesh Reddy, Headquarters: New Delhi, Established: 1958.

2. World Braille Day: 4 January

- The day is marked remembering the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille – for people with visual disabilities.

3. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

- PBD 2021: The **16th** PBD Convention was held virtually in **New Delhi**. The theme was "**Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat**".
- **Chief Guest:** President of Suriname **Chandrikapersad Santokhi**.
- **30 Winners** of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award 2021 includes Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, Curacao Prime Minister Eugene Rhuggenaath and New Zealand minister Priyanca Radhakrishnan. It is the highest honour conferred on a Non-Resident Indian, Person of Indian Origin; or an organisation or institution established and run by Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin, who have made significant contribution in better understanding of India abroad, support India's causes and concerns in a tangible way, community work abroad, welfare of local Indian community, philanthropic and charitable work, etc.

4. "World Hindi Day" : 10th January

- Note : National Hindi Day is celebrated in India on September 14 every year.

5. National Youth Day - 12th January

- It is held every year on 12th January to observe the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
- Theme of 2021 Festival (12th to 16th January) : **'YUVAAH – Utsah Naye Bharat Ka'** ('Channelizing Youth Power for Nation Building').

6. Armed Forces Veterans Day : 14 January

7. 73rd Indian Army day : 15th January

- It is celebrated every year on **15th January** in India to commemorate the jawans and the Indian Army.
- On 15th January 1949, **Field Marshal Kodandera M. Cariappa**, who was then a Lieutenant General, took over as the **first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army** from General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British person to hold that post. He is also one of only two Indian Army officers to hold the Five-star rank of **Field Marshal**, the other being Field Marshal **Sam Manekshaw**.

8. Thiruvalluvar Day

- The Prime Minister remembered Thiruvalluvar on the occasion of Thiruvalluvar Day (15th January 2021), observed to mark the birth anniversary of Tamil poet and philosopher.
- Thiruvalluvar Day is usually observed either on 15th or 16th January in Tamil Nadu and is a part of Pongal celebrations.

Thiruvalluvar was a **Tamil poet-saint**. He is regarded as a cultural and moral icon for Tamils across caste and religious lines. His primary work **Thirukkural** (contribution to Tamil Literature) contains 1330 couplets (kural).

9. NDRF Celebrates its 16th Raising Day on 18th January

- National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is a specialized multi-skilled, humanitarian force of the country, which came into existence on **January 19th, 2006**. It has been playing a vital role in Disaster Management and Community awareness for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the country.

10. International Day of Education: 24 January

- theme 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation'.

11. National Girl Child Day: January 24

12. National Tourism Day of India: January 25

13. National Voters' Day observed on 25 January

- theme : 'Making Our Voters Empowered, Vigilant, Safe and Informed'.

14. International Customs Day: 26 January

- theme: "Customs bolstering Recovery, Renewal and Resilience".

15. 73rd Martyrs' Day observed on 30 January

- Martyr's Day or Shaheed Diwas is observed every year on January 30 in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, who was assassinated at Gandhi Smriti in the Birla House by Nathuram Godse in 1948.
- The day is observed to remember the sacrifices made by freedom fighters in the struggle for India's independence and to pay our respects to them.
- Notably, Martyrs' Day is also observed in India on March 23 to pay respect to Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar, who was hanged death on this day in 1931.

AWARD

1. Kayakalp Awards

- Recently the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has conferred **5th National Kayakalp awards** to Public and Private Health Facilities for high standards of Sanitation and Hygiene.
- Government of India launched a National Initiative 'Kayakalp' on **15th May 2015** to ensure hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness in Public Health Facilities in India.
- Note : **AIIMS Bhubaneswar** receives Kayakalp Award for 3rd time

2. Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

- Recently, 32 children have been awarded the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar' for their exceptional abilities and outstanding accomplishments.
- The Awards are given by the President of India in the week preceding Republic Day (26th January) every year.
- Two Categories: The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is given under two categories:
- Bal Shakti Puraskar, and
- Bal Kalyan Puraskar.

Bal Shakti Puraskar : it is given by the Government of India every year to recognize exceptional achievements of children in various fields i.e., innovation, scholastic achievements, social service, arts & culture, sports and bravery.

- Eligibility: A child who is an Indian Citizen and residing in India and is between 5-18 years of age.
- Award: A medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000, book vouchers worth Rs.10,000, a certificate and citation.
- Background: It was instituted in 1996 as the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement, renamed from 2018 as Bal Shakti Puraskar.

Bal Kalyan Puraskar : It is given as recognition to Individuals and Institutions, who have made an outstanding contribution towards service for children in the field of child development, child protection and child welfare.

- An individual who is an Indian Citizen and residing in India and should have attained the age of 18 years or above (as on 31st August of respective year). S/he should have worked for the cause of children for not less than 7 years.
- The institution should not be entirely funded by the government and should have been in the field of child welfare for 10 years and performing consistently in the field.
- **Award:** Three awards are given in each of the two categories - Individual and Institution - along with cash prizes (Rs. 1,00, 000 and Rs. 5,00, 000 respectively).
- It was instituted in 1979 as the National Child Welfare Awards, renamed from 2018 as Bal Kalyan Puraskar.

3. Padma Awards 2021

- Recently, the Padma Awards for the year 2021 were announced on the occasion of **72nd Republic Day**.
- A total of **119** Padma awards will be conferred, including **7 padma vibhushan, 10 padma bhushan** and **102 padma shri**.
- Among the 2021 awardees, **29 are women, one is a transgender, 10 are foreigners/NRIs/OCI and 16 Posthumous awardees**
- Instituted in 1954, the Padma Awards are announced annually on the **Republic Day (26th January)** and are presented by the President of India usually in the month of **March/April** every year.
- The Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the **Padma Awards Committee**, which is constituted by the **Prime Minister** every year.
- These awards cater to various disciplines including art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service.
- 'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service.
- 'Padma Bhushan' is awarded for distinguished service of a high order.
- 'Padma Shri' is awarded for distinguished service in any field.

Imp for HP state exams : out of 102 *Padma Shree* awards, "**Shri Kartar Paras Ram Singh**" is from Himachal Pradesh. He is a **Bamboo artist** and belongs to **Hamirpur** District of HP.

Padma Vibhushan (7)

- **Shri Shinzo Abe** - Public Affairs - Japan
- **Shri S P Balasubramaniam** (Posthumous) - Art - Tamil Nadu
- **Dr. Belle Monappa Hegde** - Medicine - Karnataka
- **Shri Narinder Singh Kapany** (Posthumous) - Science and Engineering - United States of America
- **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan** - Others - Spiritualism - Delhi
- **Shri B. B. Lal** Others - Archaeology - Delhi
- **Shri Sudarshan Sahoo** - Art - Odisha

- Note : There will be no recipient of the Bharat Ratna in 2021.

4. Ram Temple tableau of Uttar Pradesh on Republic Day wins 1st prize

- The theme of Uttar Pradesh's tableau was 'Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh'.

5. Meghalaya wins National Award for Best Electoral Practices 2020

6. Subhash Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

- Conferred upon **Dr Rajendra Kumar Bhandari** in the Individual category and **Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS)** in Institutional category.
- The award carries a cash prize of **Rs 51 lakh** and a certificate for an institution and **Rs 5 lakh** and a certificate in case of an individual.

- The Government of India announces the award every year on January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, to recognise and honour the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organisations in India in the field of disaster management.

RANKING

1. Henley Passport Index 2021

- India has been ranked **85th** in the most powerful passport report 'Henley Passport Index 2021'.
- The Henley Passport Index is the original ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- **Japan** continues to hold the number one position on the index, with passport holders able to access 191 destinations around the world visa-free. **Singapore** is in second place (with a score of 190) and **South Korea** ties with Germany in third place (with a score of 189).

2. Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2021 : Mukesh Ambani ranked 12th

- India's richest man Mukesh Ambani, the chairman and Managing Director of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) dropped down to 12th spot in the Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2021 (as on 2nd January 2021).
- Zhong Shanshan, referred to as "Lone Wolf", has replaced Ambani as Asia's richest person, he is one of the fastest in the history to achieve the feat.
 - 1st position : **Jeff Bezos** - Amazon CEO (190 Billion USD)
 - 2nd position : **Elon R Musk** – CEO of SpaceX & Tesla (170 Billion USD)
 - 3rd position : **Bill Gates** – Co-founder of Microsoft (132 Billion USD)

3. India Secures 86th Rank in Corruption Perception Index 2020 released by Transparency International.

- Last year (In 2019), India was ranked at 80th spot.

4. India Ranks 7th in Global Climate Risk Index 2021 of Germanwatch

REPORTS

1. Adaptation Gap Report 2020: UNEP

- Recently, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report 2020 estimated the annual cost of adaptation to the effects of climate change for developing countries to at least **quadruple by 2050**.
- The current cost for these countries is in the range of USD 70 billion (Rs 5.1 lakh crore) and may rise to USD 140-300 billion in 2030 and USD 280-500 billion in 2050.
- Adaptation Cost: It includes costs of planning, preparing for, facilitating and implementing adaptation measures.

2. World Economic Outlook: IMF

- Recently, the latest World Economic Outlook of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will grow by 11.5% in the Financial Year (FY) 2021-22.

3. Covid-19 Performance Index

- India has been ranked **86th** in a "Covid-19 Performance Index" comprising 98 countries.
- Covid-19 Performance Index was compiled by the Sydney-based **Lowy Institute**, an Australian think tank, which sought to measure the response of countries to the Pandemic.

SUMMITS

1. 47th G7 Summit

- The United Kingdom has invited Indian Prime Minister as a guest to attend the 47th G7 summit that is scheduled to be held in June 2021. Apart from India, Australia and South Korea are also invited to participate in the proceedings of the summit as "guest countries".

- **About G7** : It is an intergovernmental organisation that was formed in 1975.
- G-7 is a bloc of industrialized democracies i.e. France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, and Canada.
- The G7 was known as the 'G8' for several years after the original seven were joined by Russia in 1997.
- The Group returned to being called G7 after Russia was expelled as a member in 2014 following the latter's annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine.

2. France hosts 4th One Planet Summit

- It aim to protect the world's biodiversity.
- The Summit was organised in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank.
- The theme of the Summit was **"Let's act together for nature!"**.

3. 'Prarambh: Startup India International Summit , New Delhi

- The Summit has been organized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under M/o Commerce & Industry.
- The inaugural event was participated by the members of **BIMSTEC** (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries.
- The 'Prarambh' Summit will provide a platform to the startups and young minds from around the world to come together and collaborate to work collectively to come with new ideas, innovation and invention.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched **Rs 1,000-crore 'Startup India Seed Fund'** which will help in setting up new startups and promote their growth.

APPOINTMENTS NEWS

1. **Umesh Sinha** : He is named deputy election commissioner on contract basis for a period of six months
 - (note : Chief Election Commissioner of India is Sunil Arora.)

2. **ISRO Chairman K Sivan gets one year extension up to 2022**

3. **Pankaj Mithal** : Chief Justice (CJ) of the Common High Court for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh in Jammu

4. Lt Gen **Shantanu Dayal** to take charge as **Deputy Chief of Army Staff**
(note : Chief of the Army Staff is General Manoj Mukund Naravane)

5. Alex Ellis : British high commissioner to India

6. Indian-American Raj Iyer : U.S. Army's first CIO (Chief Information Officer)

7. Hima Kohli : 1st Woman Chief Justice of Telangana High Court

8. Arup Kumar Goswami : CJ of Andhra Pradesh High Court

9. JK Maheshwari : Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court

10. Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia : Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court

11. PM Modi appointed chairman of Somnath Temple Trust

- After former PM Morarji Desai, Narendra Modi is the second Prime Minister who has been appointed the chairman of the temple trust.

12. **Siddhartha Mohanty** : managing director of LIC

13. Lt Gen Chandi Prasad Mohanty appointed as new Army Vice-Chief
14. Joe Biden takes oath as 46th US President
 - At 78, Biden is the oldest president in US history and only the second Roman Catholic president.
 - He served as vice president under Barack Obama's Presidency.
 - **Note** : US president takes oath on 20th January.
15. Joe Biden names two Indian-Americans in US National Security Council
 - He named **Sumona Guha** as senior director for South Asia and **Tarun Chhabra** as senior director for Technology and National Security.
16. **Jay Shah**
 - He has been named BCCI's Official Representative on ICC Board for the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board meetings.
 - Shah is the Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).
17. Indian-American **Garima Verma** named digital director in Office of the First Lady of US - Jill Biden
18. **Nazhat Shameem Khan**
 - The **UN Human Rights Council** elected Fiji's ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan as its 2021 **president** in an unprecedented secret ballot.
19. **Yoweri Museveni** wins the sixth term as Uganda's President
20. Kaja Kallas to become Estonia's first female prime minister

SPORTS NEWS

1. Goa's 14-year **Leon Mendonca** becomes India's 67th chess Grandmaster
2. Dhaka Marathon 2021
 - **Jigmet Dolma** (SPO of Ladakh police) from India secured the fourth position in the Dhaka Marathon 2021.
3. The inaugural edition of the Khelo India Zaskar Winter Sport & Youth festival 2021 begins in Ladakh.

OBITUARIES NEWS

1. **Buta Singh** : Former Union Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government and senior Rajasthan Congress leader
2. **Ace mountaineer Colonel Narendra 'Bull' Kumar**
 - He helped India secure the Siachen Glacier under Operation Meghdoot in 1984
 - He was also the first Indian to climb Mount Nanda Devi.
3. **Michael Kindo** : World Cup winning hockey player of India
4. **Madhansinh Solanki** : former Gujarat Chief Minister and senior Congress leader
5. **Neil Sheehan** : Pulitzer Prize-winning author & journalist
6. **Dr V Shanta** : Padma Award winning Renowned Oncologist

COMMITTEES

1. **Preeti Pant Panel** : appointed to study adverse findings of National Family Health Survey-5.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS NEWS

1. "Modi India Calling – 2021" : by Vijay Jolly
2. "The Population Myth: Islam, Family Planning and Politics in India" : by S Y Quraishi (Former chief election commissioner).
3. "The Commonwealth of Cricket" : by Ramchandra Guha's latest book

STATE NEWS

1. "Radio Hills-Youngistan Ka Dil"

- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has launched Himachal Pradesh's first online youth radio station "Radio Hills-Youngistan Ka Dil".
- The founders of the online radio : Deepika and Saurabh.

2. Cherry Blossom Festival : held in Manipur

- The Mao area of Senapati district in Manipur is known for Cherry Blossom, a plant which is popularly known as Sakura in Japan.

3. India's first 'Fire Park' : Odisha

- Aim : to educate and bring awareness on basic fire safety measures among the people, particularly the students.

4. Kerala Governor launches 'One School One IAS' scheme

- The programme will be providing free training to the students who are economically backward but are academically brilliant aspirants of civil service and other competitive exams.

5. Maharashtra launches 'jail tourism' initiative from Pune's Yerawada jail

- The initiative was launched in a move to help students learn about historical experiences.
- Yerawada jail is 150 years old where several freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak were imprisoned, Pune-pact was signed within the premises etc.
- The visitors will also get to see the faasi yard, the area where the death sentence is executed.
- This is the place where Chapekar brothers were executed in 1899 for the assassination of British Plague Commissioner of Pune WC Rand.
- The last execution that the faasi yard witnessed was in November 2012 of Ajmal Kasab, a convict of 26/11 attacks, who was buried inside the prison premises.

6. Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan launches 'PANKH Abhiyan' for empowering Girl Child

7. The **Gujarat** state government has renamed dragon fruit as '**Kamalam**' because of the 'lotus like' shape of the fruit.

8. India's longest Road Arch Bridge ("**Wahrew Bridge**") inaugurated at Sohbar in East Khasi Hills district of **Meghalaya** .

9. Haridwar nineteen-year-old girl **Shrishti Goswami** become one-day **CM of Uttarakhand** on National Girl Child Day.

10. India's **First 'Gender Park'** set up in **Kozhikode**, Kerala.