



# PIB

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AN INITIATIVE BY PRADEEP KUMAR  
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# Learn FINITE

The information in this magazine is intended to provide users with resources and information which they may find useful and of interest.

We take all reasonable steps to keep this information current and accurate, but errors can occur.

We express our gratitude to all our team members and thankful to all the advisors for making first step in publishing a small magazine.

## Our Methodology for this Magazine

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We have used official website pib.nic.in to collect important press release important for Exam

The topics has been categorised subject wise so that is is easy for aspirants to read in flow and relate the topics

Background information has been provided so static related to current can be covered

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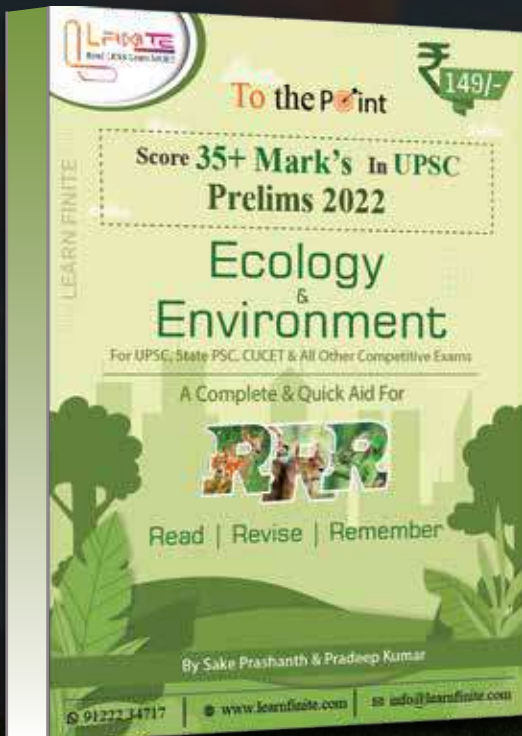
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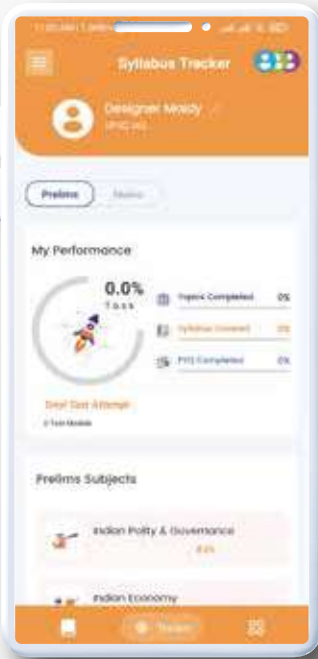
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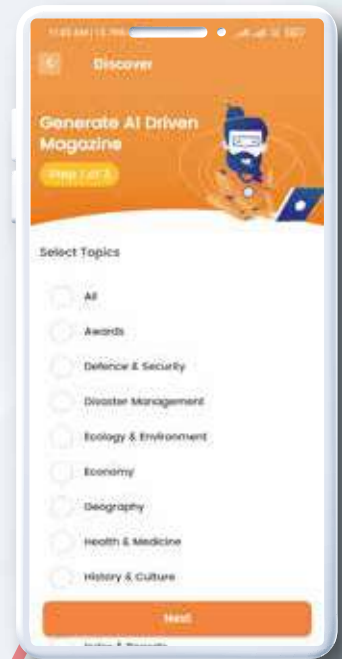
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# History & Culture

## Kala Utsav 2020

### In news

Union Education Minister addresses the Valedictory Function of Kala Utsav 2020 Kala Utsav realises the vision of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi by giving the right direction and shape to the spirit of '*Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat*'.

### About Kala Utsav 2020

- Kala Utsav is an initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, to promote arts in education by nurturing and showcasing the artistic talent of school students at the secondary stage in the country.
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) recognises the importance of aesthetics and artistic experiences for secondary-level students, which play a major role in creating awareness of India's rich cultural heritage and its vibrant diversity.
- In the context of education of Arts (Music, Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts and Crafts), the initiative is guided by the recommendations of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF-2005).
- Kala Utsav 2020 was launched online on 10 January 2021 through a digital platform.
- A total of 35 teams have participated in Kala Utsav 2020, from different states, union territories, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti schools where 576 students demonstrated their talent.

# Polity & Governance

## Triple talaq law

### Context

The bench was hearing an appeal filed against a Kerala High Court order, which had declined to grant anticipatory bail to the woman.

### In news

- A Muslim man can only commit the offence under the triple talaq law, and his mother cannot be accused of it, the Supreme Court has ruled.
- The Supreme Court has said there is no bar on granting anticipatory bail for an offence committed under the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019, which makes the practice of instant divorce through "triple talaq" among Muslims a punishable offence, provided the court hears the complainant woman before granting pre-arrest bail.
- The judgment said that even legislation, such as the SC and ST Act, where a bar is interposed on the application of Section 438 of the CrPC (anticipatory bail), "this court has held that the bar will not apply where the complaint does not make out 'a prima facie case' for the applicability of the provisions of the Act".

### Issue

The Supreme Court has observed that relatives of a 'husband' cannot be accused of an offence under Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act.



### What is Triple Talaq?

- Talaq is an Islamic word for divorce, denoting dissolution of marriage when a Muslim man can sever all marital ties with his wife.
- Under the Muslim law, Triple Talaq means liberty from the relationship of marriage, eventually or immediately, where the man, by simply uttering the word '**talaq**' three times, ends his marriage.
- This instant divorce is called Triple Talaq, also known as '**talaq-e-biddat**'.
- The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937 had legalised and allowed the practice of Triple Talaq which gave a Muslim husband special privileges over his wife.

### What is the Triple Talaq law?

- The Indian Parliament as a law passed triple Talaq, also known as Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019, on July 30, 2019, to make instant Triple Talaq a criminal offence.
- The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill, with 99 votes in its favour and 84 against it. The Triple Talaq law makes the instant triple talaq a criminal offence and provides for a jail term of three years for a Muslim man who commits the crime.
- The law also makes Triple Talaq a cognisable and non-bailable offence. Introduced in the Lok Sabha by Minister of Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad on June 21, 2019, the Bill replaced an Ordinance promulgated on February 21, 2019.
- As the Bill was pending for consideration in the Rajya Sabha and the practice of Triple Talaq divorce system was continuing, there was an urgent need to take immediate action to prevent such a practice by making strict provisions in law.

## Prarambh: Startup India International Summit

### In news

The two day 'Prarambh', Startup India International Summit begin in New Delhi

### Prarambh

- As a noun, '**Prarambh**' means 'an auspicious beginning'. As a verb, it implies 'to start'.
- Prarambh is expected to bring together top policy makers, industry, academia, investors, startups and all stakeholders from across the globe.
- In addition to deliberating on good practices from best of the ecosystems across the world, the sessions of the Summit are designed to showcase the spread and depth of entrepreneurship based on innovation in India.
- The idea is to attract attention of global capital for startups in India, mobilize domestic capital, provide opportunities for accessing international markets to our startups and evolve enabling policy provisions.\

### Objectives

- Encouraging and inspiring the youth for innovation and entrepreneurship
- Exchange knowledge on best practices on nurturing startup ecosystems
- Develop capacities of entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Mobilize global and domestic capital for investments into startups
- Provide opportunities to startups for entering domestic (private and public) and international markets
- Showcasing high-quality, high technology and frugal innovations from India
- Enable ease of doing business for startups and investors.

## Chintan Baithak

### In news

Chintan Baithak' to be held at Dhordo, Kutch,Gujarat from 21st to 23rd January,2021

### Highlights

- Chintan Baithak is a important initiative for finalising a roadmap of India's Maritime sector for the next decade.
- The Chintan Baithak includes sessions on exploring new vistas of urban transportation, effective implementation of SAROD-Ports, issues related to International Arbitrations etc.
- The future action plan for development of satellite ports by all major ports will be deliberated.
- Chintan Baithak is to evolve out of the box ideas for improving the performance and efficiency of our Major Ports, setting up of world-class infrastructure facilities at ports by adopting global benchmarks for reducing logistics costs, enhancing connectivity and Ease Of Doing Business are our focus areas.
- All the ideas emerged out of the extensive discussions during this Chintan Baithak are going to be dovetailed in the Maritime Vision 2030
- The vision is to fulfil Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of ' Atmanirbhar Bharat' with his key mantra of '**Reform, Perform & Transform**'

## MEITY's Rapid Assessment System

### In news

Under the Covid Vaccination drive, the Government of India is using 'Rapid Assessment System (RAS)', a platform developed by Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) for taking feedback from those who get vaccinated.

### Aim

RAS platform is aimed at improving the vaccination experience for citizens, while ensuring that all norms are being followed during the vaccination process at all vaccination centres.

### Feedback

This feedback system will help the Government to make the vaccination process more citizen-friendly. RAS platform has already sent out around 6.2 lakh SMSes to all those who have been vaccinated in a short span of 4 days.

### The following process has been put in place to collect feedback on vaccination experience.

- Registered mobile numbers and names of those vaccinated on a day are sent to RAS system by Co-WIN platform at midnight.
- RAS system prepares a unique URL for feedback questions and sends personalized SMSs to all beneficiary of that day.
- SMS contains the name of the person, dose (first/ second), and a unique URL. The sender ID used for SMS is "**GOVRAS**".

### Rapid Assessment System (RAS)

- National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics & IT, developed Rapid Assessment System (RAS) for online instant feedback for e-services (online as well as offline through counters) delivered by the Government of India and State Governments.
- The **main objective of RAS** is to continuously assess the quality of eServices, through feedback, under each e-Governance project and realign processes to achieve targeted benefits.

- RAS interface prompts the citizens to provide feedback about the quality of service immediately after the citizen avails an eService of the Government.
- The analytic features of RAS help integrated departments in system improvement and better delivery of services.

## Shramshakti

### In news

Ministry of Tribal Affairs Virtually Launches “*Shramshakti*” Digital Data Solution for Migrant Workers

### Highlights

- A National Migration Support Portal at a programme held at Panjim, Goa.
- It would effectively help in the smooth formulation of state and national level programs for migrant workers.
- He also launched a tribal migration cell, a tribal museum at Goa and “*ShramSaathi*”, a training manual for migrant workers.
- The Chief Minister of Goa Pramod Sawant also launched dedicated Migration cell in Goa to facilitate and support migrants who come from different States to Goa.

### Challenge

- Lack of real time data of migrants was the biggest challenge for state and national governments in formulating effective strategies and policy decisions for welfare of migrant workers at both source and destination states
- The migration of tribal population is distress-driven and the migrants are exposed to difficult and unsafe conditions.

### Significance

- It would help the government for linking the migrant population with existing Welfare Scheme- under Atam Nirbhar Bharat.
- The various data that will be recorded via Shram Shakti include demographic profile, livelihood options, skill mapping and migration pattern.
- After training via this module, tribal migrant workers will be able to demand and access services, rights and entitlements related to livelihood and social security at their village before migration, as well after migration at destination towns and cities.

## Economy

### Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products

#### In news

Taking a major step to boost exports, Government has decided to extend the benefit of the Scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) to all export goods with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2021.

#### Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme

- The Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme was announced by Government of India (GOI) on 14 September 2019

- It was announced to boost exports by allowing reimbursement of taxes and duties, which are not exempted or refunded under any other scheme in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) norms.

### Objective of the RoDTEP Scheme

- Refund to exporters the embedded Central, State and local duties/taxes that were so far not being rebated/refunded and were, therefore, placing our exports at a disadvantage.
- Refund would be credited in an exporter's ledger account with Customs and used to pay Basic Customs duty on imported goods. The credits can also be transferred to other importers.

## IFSCA becomes member of IOSCO

### In news

The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) has become an Associate Member of the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO)

### Highlights

- The membership of IOSCO would provide IFSCA the platform to exchange information at the global level and regional level on areas of common interests.
- The IOSCO platform would enable IFSCA to learn from the experiences and best practices of the regulators of other well established financial centres.
- The IOSCO's membership is a significant milestone in connecting IFSCA with the regulators of securities markets globally and would contribute immensely towards the development and regulation of the financial products, financial services and financial institutions at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City International Financial Services Centre.

### The International Financial Services Centres Authority

It has been established on April 27, 2020 under the International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019. It is headquartered at GIFT City, Gandhinagar in Gujarat

### Role of IFSCA

- The IFSCA is a unified authority for the development and regulation of financial products, financial services and financial institutions in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in India.
- At present, the GIFT IFSC is the maiden international financial services centre in India.
- Prior to the establishment of IFSCA, the domestic financial regulators, namely, RBI, SEBI, PFRDA and IRDAI regulated the business in IFSC.

### The International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO)

A global cooperative of securities regulatory agencies aims to establish and maintain worldwide standards for efficient, orderly and fair markets.

### IOSCO Objectives

- To cooperate in developing, implementing and promoting adherence to internationally recognized and consistent standards of regulation, oversight and enforcement in order to protect investors, maintain fair, efficient and transparent markets, and seek to address systemic risks;
- To enhance investor protection and promote investor confidence in the integrity of securities markets, through strengthened information exchange and cooperation in enforcement against misconduct and in supervision of markets and market intermediaries; and



- To exchange information at both global and regional levels on their respective experiences in order to assist the development of markets, strengthen market infrastructure and implement appropriate regulation.

## TRIFOOD Parks

### In news

Trifed Signs MoU with Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram for Setting up of TRIFOOD Parks in Madhya Pradesh.

### Highlights

- Its mission is to improve tribal livelihoods.
- The two organisations will work together by undertaking various initiatives all aimed at improving the livelihood of tribal people and implementation of the **Van Dhan Yojana** through the mobilization of Self Help Groups (SHGs) / VanDhanVikas Kendra (VDVKs) / VPCs / TRIFOOD Parks.
- With TRIFED as the mentoring organization, it has been agreed that VanvasiKalyan Ashram would form new Van DhanKendras in tribal areas by identifying SHGs, organize training, building infrastructure, provide machinery and equipment and other support.
- Among other scope of activities, Kalyan Ashram will include other areas, viz agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, fisheries, animal husbandry, handlooms, crafts to keep the operations running year-long and make the VanDhan scheme all-inclusive and viable.

### TRIFOOD

- This Scheme is a joint initiative of Ministry of Food Processing Industry, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED.
- TRIFOOD Scheme, implemented in the backdrop of VanDhan Yojana will promote value addition to Minor Forest Produce (MFP).
- The units are envisaged to be professionally operated by reputed food processors who will operate the facilities for a designated period of time under the overall administrative control of TRIFED so that the assets created are efficiently commercially utilised as per its installed capacities and designed objectives.
- In the process creating local employment opportunities for the tribal communities and providing entrepreneurial opportunities in terms of raw material linkages to the units.

### Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram

- It is an Indian social welfare organization based in Jashpur, in the Chhattisgarh state of India.
- It focuses on the welfare activities of Janjatis, that is Scheduled Tribes in remote areas of Bharat (India), and has branches throughout the country.
- These branches focus on agriculture, healthcare, child education, and sports.
- It also works to create cultural awareness among janjatis thereby facilitating the idea of preservation of their tradition and customs followed in different groups.

## Blue Economy - important source of Aatamnirbhar Bharat

### In news

Development of the coastal areas and welfare of hardworking fishermen is one of the important priority of the Government

### Blue Economy

- The idea of the “blue economy” was conceived at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.
- The Blue Economy is determined to initiate appropriate programs for

- The sustainable harnessing of ocean resources; research and development
- Developing relevant sectors of oceanography; stock assessment of marine resources
- Introducing marine aquaculture, deep sea/long line fishing and biotechnology
- Human resource development; among others.

### Objective

To promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and employment opportunities within the Indian Ocean region's maritime economic activities.

## Cooperation between India and Japan on Partnership in "Specified Skilled Worker"

### In news

The Union Cabinet, has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of India and Government of Japan, on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to **"Specified Skilled Worker"**.

### Details

- The present Memorandum of Cooperation would set an institutional mechanism for partnership and cooperation between India and Japan on sending and accepting skilled Indian workers, who have qualified the required skill and Japanese language test, to work in fourteen specified sectors in Japan.
- The Government of Japan would grant these Indian workers a new status of residence of "Specified Skilled Worker".

### Implementation Strategy:

Under this MOC, a Joint Working Group will be set up to follow up the implementation of this MOC.

### Major Impact

The Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) would enhance people-to-people contacts, foster mobility of workers and skilled professionals from India to Japan.

### Beneficiaries

Skilled Indian workers from fourteen sectors viz. Nursing care; Building cleaning; Material Processing industry; Industrial machinery manufacturing industry; Electric and electronic information related industry; Construction; Shipbuilding and ship-related industry; Automobile maintenance; Aviation; Lodging; Agriculture; Fisheries; Food and beverages manufacturing industry and Food service industry would have enhanced job opportunities to work in Japan.

## Urban Local Bodies reforms

### In news

Telangana has become the 3<sup>rd</sup> State in the country to successfully undertake **"Urban Local Bodies (ULB)"** reform stipulated by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance.

### Other States

Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, have completed this reform.

### Aim of the reform

Financial strengthening of ULBs in the State and to enable them to provide better public health and sanitation services

### Objectives

- The State will notify (a) floor rates of property tax in ULBs which are in consonance with the prevailing circle rates (i.e. guideline rates for property transactions) and (b) floor rates of user charges in respect of the provision of water-supply, drainage and sewerage which reflect current costs/ past inflation.
- The State will put in place a system of periodic increase in floor rates of property tax/ user charges in line with price increases.

### Citizen centric areas identified for reforms

- Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card System
- Ease of doing business reform
- Urban Local body/ utility reforms
- Power Sector reforms.

## Seventh Trade Policy Review of India at the WTO

### In news

The second and final Session of India's seventh Trade Policy Review (TPR) concluded on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021, at the World Trade Organization in Geneva

### Trade Policy Reviews

- Surveillance of national trade policies is a fundamentally important activity running throughout the work of the WTO.
- At the centre of this work is the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM).
- All WTO members are reviewed, the frequency of each country's review varying according to its share of world trade.

### Importance of Trade Policy Reviews

- The TPRM is a valuable tool for the development of trade policies in developing and least developed countries.
- These Members often face challenges in adjusting their domestic policies in compliance with multilateral trade rules, and TPRs can help them self-assess existing measures as well as taking new trade policy-making directions.

### India's progress

- Since previous TPR, India has worked diligently to reform and transform the entire economic eco-system to meet the socio-economic aspirations of a billion-plus Indians.
- The introduction of the GST, the IBC, labour sector reforms, an enabling and investor-friendly FDI Policy, and various national programmes like Make in India, Digital India, Startup India and Skill were the path-breakers.

## Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2020-21

### In news

The issue price for the Sovereign Gold Bond has been fixed at Rs 5,104 per gram of gold.

## Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB)

- SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold.
- They are substitutes for holding physical gold.
- Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be redeemed in cash on maturity.
- The Bond is issued by Reserve Bank on behalf of Government of India.

## Benefits

- The quantity of gold for which the investor pays is protected, since he receives the ongoing market price at the time of redemption/ premature redemption.
- The SGB offers a superior alternative to holding gold in physical form. The risks and costs of storage are eliminated.
- Investors are assured of the market value of gold at the time of maturity and periodical interest.
- SGB is free from issues like making charges and purity in the case of gold in jewellery form.
- The bonds are held in the books of the RBI or in demat form eliminating risk of loss of scrip etc.

## Non-toxic wall paint

### In news

The eco-friendly, non-toxic paint, called “Khadi Prakritik Paint” is a first-of-its-kind product, with anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties was launched on 12 Jan 2021

### Highlight

- Based on cow dung as its main ingredient, the paint is cost-effective and odorless, and has been certified by Bureau of Indian Standards
- Khadi Prakritik Paint is available in two forms – distemper paint and plastic emulsion paint.
- Production of Khadi Prakritik Paint is aligned with Hon’ble Prime Minister’s vision of increasing farmers’ income.
- The project was conceptualized by Chairman KVIC in March 2020, and later developed by Kumarappa National Handmade Paper Institute, Jaipur (a KVIC unit).
- The paint is free from heavy metals like lead, mercury, chromium, arsenic, cadmium and others.

### Significance

It will be a boost to local manufacturing and will create sustainable local employment through technology transfer. This technology will increase consumption of cow dung as a raw material for eco-friendly products and will generate additional revenue to farmers and gaushalas.

## NCAVES India Forum 2021

### In news

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation has taken up several initiatives under the NCAVES Project during the past three years

### Highlights

- Three live sessions of NCAVES India Forum 2021 are scheduled to be held on January 14, 21 and 28, 2021
- **Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of the Ecosystem Services (NCAVES)** India Forum-2021 is being organised by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- India is one of the five countries taking part in this project – the other countries being **Brazil, China, South Africa and Mexico**.



### The objectives of the National Forum would be

- To present India's achievements in the domain of Natural Capital Accounting (NCA);
- To prioritize the emerging opportunities for NCA in India;
- To familiarize stakeholders with the work undertaken by the different international agencies in the area of NCA; and
- To provide a platform to selected Research Institutions to present their research conducted in the valuation of ecosystem services.

### What is NCAVES Project?

- The United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Union have launched the project.
- **Aim:** To assist the five participating partner countries, namely Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, to advance the knowledge agenda on environmental-economic accounting, in particular ecosystem accounting.
- **Funding and Duration:** The project is funded by the European Union(EU) and will have a duration until the end of 2021.
- **Implementation of Project in India:** In India, the NCAVES project is being implemented by the MoSPI in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the National Remote Sensing Centre(NRSC).

## APEDA and Indian Embassy

### In news

In a bid to boost exports potential of India's agricultural and processed food products exports, APEDA has organized a Virtual Buyer Seller Meet (BSM) in association with Indian Embassy in, Azerbaijan today

### Highlights

- The meet brought together key stakeholders from the respective Governments and trade on a common platform for strengthening strategic cooperation between India and Azerbaijan in export of Basmati Rice.
- APEDA took a lead to organize Virtual BSM to provide a platform to the exporters and importers of India and Azerbaijan
- This Virtual-BSM with Azerbaijan is the 16<sup>th</sup> in the series of such events organized by APEDA with various countries.
- Earlier such virtual Virtual-BSM was first organized with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) followed by Kuwait, Indonesia, Switzerland, Belgium, Iran, South Africa, Germany, The United States, Canada and Australia, Thailand and Nepal.

### Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is a government organization established in 1985 through an act for the development and promotion of export of scheduled products.
- It provides financial assistance, information, guidelines towards the development of scheduled products.
- The products specified under the APEDA ACT are called schedule products and exporters of such scheduled products are required register under APEDA.

### Objective

- To promote schedule products export and to achieve this various functions has been undertaken by this body under the regulation of central government.

- Central government lays down the rules and regulation and implements through this body for the efficient administration of APEDA Act.

## Kevadia- Emerging as a major global tourist destination

### In news

Kevadiya in Gujarat is no longer just a small block in some remote area, it has come up as a one of the biggest tourist destination of the world.

### Kevadiya

- Kevadia is a census town in Narmada district in the Indian state of Gujarat.
- This town is famous tourist Location, as Statue of Unity is located here.
- The town also has a Railway Station, which is located at a distance of just 5 kilometres from Statue of Unity.

### The Statue of Unity

- It is a colossal statue of Indian statesman and independence activist Vallabhbhai Patel (1875–1950), who was the first Deputy Prime Minister and Home minister of independent India and adherent of Mahatma Gandhi during the non-violent Indian Independence movement.
- Patel was highly respected for his leadership in uniting 562 princely states of India with a major part of the former British Raj to form the single Union of India.

### Improving tourism in kevadiya

- Eight trains connecting different regions of the country to Kevadiya in Gujarat was flagged off.
- The train that will connect Hazrat Nizamuddin, Varanasi, Rewa, Dadar, Chennai, Pratapnagar comprises of Vistadome, AC chair car Executive Class, AC chair car and Non-AC chair car coaches.

## APEDA –for Connecting Agri-Export

### In news

An Initiative of APEDA –for Connecting Agri-Export through Direct Flights from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Varanasi

### Facilities available at this airport that are as below

- Cold room facility for perishable agricultural produce.
- Custom clearance has been invited at the airport for speedy custom clearance.
- Clearing agents (custom agents)
- Facilities related to custom clearance, AD code registrations for traders/exporters
- Phyto-sanitary Clearance through the plant quarantine department.
- All major airlines – Air India Express, Air India, SpiceJet, IndiGo have been encouraged to set up BG bond & trans-shipment clearance of international cargo at Varanasi airport.

### APEDA

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December, 1985.

## Objective

The objective of APEDA is to promote schedule products export and to achieve this various functions has been undertaken by this body under the regulation of central government. Central government lays down the rules and regulation and implements through this body for the efficient administration of APEDA Act.

## India Innovation Index 2.0

### In news

NITI Aayog releases 2nd edition of India Innovation Index-2020

### Highlights

- The index demonstrates the government's continued commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.
- Innovation Index in sync with Global innovation index's parameters.
- Innovation will play a key role in making the country self-reliant and heading towards the five trillion dollar economy.
- The innovation index will increase the competitive federalism among the States and Union Territories.

### Innovation Index

- The index ranks different states and UTs based on how they support innovation and disruptive technologies.
- The first edition of the index was launched in October 2019.
- The motive of the index is to showcase the government's initiative to create an innovation-driven economy.

## Tripartite agreement

### In news

Tripartite agreement signed between MECL, RSMML and DMG for harnessing Potash in Rajasthan

### Significance

- MoU will pave the way to undertake feasibility studies for harnessing sub-surface salt deposits through solution mining, utilise Rajasthan's rich mineral reserves, boost its economy and establish it as a hub of solution mining of potash, the 1st in the country.
- Paving the way for the 1st Solution Mining project in the country, this project will generate employment as well as support the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan by way of generating import substitution by boosting the domestic mineral production of Potash and associated minerals.

### Rajasthan Mineral

- Rajasthan has huge Potash and Halite resources spread across 50,000 sq. kms in the Nagaur – Ganganagar basin in the northwest.
- Bedded Salt formations are strategically useful for underground oil storage, repositories for hydrogen, ammonia and helium gas, storage of compresses gas and nuclear waste.
- Potash & Sodium Chloride from the Bedded Salt are extensively used in the Fertiliser Industry and the Chemical Industry respectively.

## 4-tier structure for tighter regulation of NBFCs

### In news

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a tighter regulatory framework for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) by creating a four-tier structure with a progressive increase in intensity of regulation.

### Base Layer

If the framework is visualised as a pyramid, the bottom of the pyramid, where least regulatory intervention is warranted, can consist of NBFCs, currently classified as non-systemically important NBFCs (NBFC-ND), NBFCP2P lending platforms, NBFCAA, NOFHC and Type I NBFCs.

### Middle Layer

- As one moves up, the next layer can consist of NBFCs currently classified as systemically important NBFCs (NBFC-ND-SI), deposit taking NBFCs (NBFC-D), housing finance companies, IFCs, IDFs, SPDs and core investment companies.
- The regulatory regime for this layer will be stricter compared to the base layer.
- Adverse regulatory arbitrage vis-à-vis banks can be addressed for NBFCs falling in this layer in order to reduce systemic risk spill-overs, where required.

### Upper Layer

- Going further, the next layer can consist of NBFCs which are identified as systemically significant among.
- This layer will be populated by NBFCs which have large potential of systemic spill-over of risks and have the ability to impact financial stability.
- There is no parallel for this layer at present, as this will be a new layer for regulation.
- The regulatory framework for NBFCs falling in this layer will be bank-like, albeit with suitable and appropriate modifications.

### Top Layer

- It is possible that considered supervisory judgment will push some NBFCs from out of the upper layer of the systemically significant NBFCs for higher regulation/supervision.
- These NBFCs will occupy the top of the upper layer as a distinct set.
- Ideally, this top layer of the pyramid will remain empty unless supervisors take a view on specific NBFCs.
- In other words, if certain NBFCs lying in the upper layer are seen to pose extreme risks as per supervisory judgement, they can be put to higher and bespoke regulatory/supervisory requirements.

## Bharat Parv 2021

### In news

The Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other central Ministries is organizing this year a virtual 'Bharat Parv' event from 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021, showcasing the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.

### About Bharat Parv

- Bharat Parv is a festival to celebrate the spirit of India and for showcasing the rich and cultural diversity of the country. It will be celebrated till January 31.
- Bharat Parv is organized by the Tourism Ministry every year since 2016 in front of the Red Fort during the Republic Day celebrations.
- The mega festival by the government is held to generate fervour and for showcasing the varied and rich cultural heritage and diversity of India.



- The event by the tourism ministry brings together the spiritual, tourism, and other activities held in different states and UTs of India on one single platform.

### Bharat Parv 2021

- The recorded performances of the Armed forces music bands and glimpses of the Republic Day Parade will be available on the virtual platform.
- Different central ministries and organisations which includes the Ministry of Ayush, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, National Museum, Archaeological Survey of India, National Gallery of Modern Arts, Khadi, and other industries will be showing handlooms, handicrafts, dance, music, paintings and other materials from all over India.
- Prasar Bharati will also virtually showcase its efforts of promoting Ek Bharat-Shrestha Bharat.
- Another media unit of the Information and Broadcasting ministry, the Bureau of Outreach and Communication, will be focusing on the 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi by displaying videos, photos, animation related to Sashakt Bharat, Swachh Bharat, Bapu Ke Sapno ka Bharat.
- In order to celebrate the diversity and spirit of India, there will also be a rich display of books on art and culture as well as the biographies and history of builders of Modern India.

## Sovereign Gold Bond scheme

### In news

The eleventh tranche of the Sovereign Gold Bond scheme 2020-21 will be available for five days starting February 1, 2021.

### Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme

- It was launched by Govt in November 2015, under Gold Monetisation Scheme. Under the scheme, RBI makes the issues open for subscription in tranches in consultation with GOI.
- RBI Notifies the terms and conditions for the scheme from time to time. The subscription for SGB will be open as per following calendar.
- The rate of SGB will be declare by RBI before every new tranche by issuing a Press Release.
- As per RBI instructions “Every application must be accompanied by the ‘PAN Number’ issued by the Income Tax Department to the investor(s)” as the PAN number of the first/ sole applicant is mandatory.

### Gold bond advantages over physical gold

- A sovereign gold bond is a better investment than physical gold because of many reasons.
- These gold bonds allow you to get a lower price than physical gold when applied online.
- Fixed interest rate on these gold bonds.
- Gold bonds have no holding or storage cost.
- These bonds carry a sovereign guarantee since they are issued by the government.
- Another benefit of sovereign gold bond scheme is that there is no capital gains tax at maturity or redemption for individual investors. Also, there is indexation benefit if the same is transferred before maturity for non-individual investors.

## Workshop on “Committee of Creditors: An Institution of Public Trust”

### In news

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) jointly with the State Bank of India and the Indian Banks’ Association organised a one-day virtual workshop on “Committee of Creditors: An Institution of Public Trust”

## Aim

The workshop aimed at developing a better understanding of the role of and expectations from the CoC, under the Code and to build the capacity of financial creditors to ensure that the CoC:

- Discharges its statutory duties and responsibilities with utmost care and diligence.
- Has the capability and motivation to take business decisions in terms of generating multiple competing resolution plans and approving the best among them.
- Considers and balances the interest of all stakeholders in a resolution process.

## The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India

- It was established on 1st October, 2016 under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code).
- It is a key pillar of the ecosystem responsible for implementation of the Code that consolidates and amends the laws relating to reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner for maximization of the value of assets of such persons, to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit and balance the interests of all the stakeholders.

## 14th BSM conducted by Spices Board in FY 2020-21

### In news

Spices Board conducted the Virtual Buyer Seller Meet(BSM) for Chili and Turmeric, with focus on Andhra Pradesh, which saw participation from 245 stakeholders

### Highlights

- This was the 14th BSM conducted by the Board in FY 2020-21.
- India is the world's largest exporter of chili and turmeric, the exports of which have recorded a steady progress, over the years. During 2019-20, India exported 4,84,000 tonnes of chili and chili products valued at Rs.6211.70 crores which contributed to more than 40 per cent in volume and 29 per cent in value of India's total spice exports.
- Turmeric held a share of 11 per cent in volume and 6 per cent in value of the export basket, with an export of 1,36,000 tonnes valued at Rs.1216.40 crores.
- Spices items in 225 categories were exported to 185 countries in the last year.

### Requirements

- Integration between all segments of value chain will help to derive better value in export.
- There is need for more value addition in spices and urged the exporters to come up with ideas for enhancing export of value addition in chili and ways of investment in spice processing.

## Longitudinal Ageing Study of India

### In news

Dr.Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare released INDIA REPORT on Longitudinal Ageing Study of India (LASI) Wave-1 virtual platform.

### About the survey

- LASI is a full-scale national survey of scientific investigation of the health, economic, and social determinants and consequences of population ageing in India.
- It is India's first and the world's largest ever survey that provides a longitudinal database for designing policies and programmes for the older population in the broad domains of social, health, and economic well-being.

- The evidence from LASI will be used to further strengthen and broaden the scope of National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly and also help in establishing a range of preventive and health care programmes for older population and most vulnerable among them.

### Importance of the Longitudinal Aging Study in India

- In 2011 census, the 60+ population accounted for 8.6% of India's population, accounting for 103 million elderly people.
- Growing at around 3% annually, the number of elderly age population will rise to 319 million in 2050. 75% of the elderly people suffer from one or the other chronic disease.
- 40% of the elderly people have one or the other disability and 20% have issues related to mental health. This report will provide base for national and state level programmes and policies for elderly population.
- A unique feature of LASI is the coverage of comprehensive biomarkers.
- No other survey in India collects detailed data on health and biomarkers together with information on family and social network, income, assets, and consumption.

## Science & Tech

### 40th Indian scientific expedition to Antarctica

#### In news

India launched the 40<sup>th</sup> scientific expedition to Antarctica this Indian expedition marks four decades of country's scientific endeavour to the southern white continent.

#### Highlights

- The 40th expedition journey will be flagged off from Goa on January 5, 2021, with 43 members onboard
- The Indian Antarctic expeditions began in 1981. The first trip comprised of a team of 21 scientists and support staff led by Dr SZ Qasim.
- The preceding 39<sup>th</sup> Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica was launched in November 2019.

#### Background

- The Indian Antarctic expeditions began in 1981.
- The Indian Antarctic programme has now been credited to have built three permanent research base stations in Antarctica—named Dakshin Gangotri, Maitri, and Bharati.
- As of today, India has two operational research stations in Antarctica named Maitri and Bharati.
- The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, manages the entire Indian Antarctic program.

### Biodigester Mk-II Technology

#### In news

DRDO Signs MOU with MAHA-METRO for implementation of Advanced Biodigester Mk-II Technology in Metro Rail Network"

## Highlights

- DRDO's biodigester is an **indigenous, green and cost-effective technology**, with a rare distinction.
- Indian Railways has already installed about 2.40 lakh biodigesters in its fleet of passenger coaches.
- This technology is upgraded through improvements in the bio-degradation efficiency, design modification and addition of secondary treatment module.
- The new reactor is designed to provide more path length with increased biological reaction time, thereby enhancing the bio-degradation efficiency of the system.
- This technology was primarily developed for the armed forces in high altitude Himalayan regions, including Leh-Ladakh and Siachen glacier.

## Biodigester

- The biodigester technology degrades and converts human waste into usable water and gases. The generated gas is used for cooking and water for irrigation purposes. This is done in an eco-friendly manner.
- The biodigester technology involves bacteria that feed upon fecal matter.
- The fecal matter is dumped into a tank along with the bio digesting bacteria. The bacteria through anaerobic process will degrade the fecal matter. During the process water and methane gas are released.

## 5th National STI Policy

### In news

The Government of India has now released the draft of 5th National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy for public consultation.

### Aim

- The 5th Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy aim to foster, develop, and nurture a robust system for evidence and stakeholder-driven STI planning, information, evaluation, and policy research in India.
- The policy also identifies and addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian STI ecosystem to catalyse socio-economic development of India and to make the Indian STI ecosystem globally competitive.
- It also aims to bring in the concept of dynamic policy with a robust policy governance mechanism incorporating features such as implementation strategy, periodic review, policy evaluation, feedback, and adaptation, and most importantly, a timely exit strategy for various policy instruments.

### Evolution of STI policies in India are as follows:

- The **first policy** on science was adopted in the year 1958 in India-- Scientific Policy Resolution, 1958 (**SPR1958**).
- The **second policy** on science was adopted in the year 1983 in India-- Technology Policy Statement, 1983 (**TPS1983**).
- The **third policy** on science was adopted in the year 2003 in India-- Science and Technology Policy 2003 (**STP2003**).
- The **fourth policy** on science was adopted in the year 2013 in India-- Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2013 (**STIP2013**).

### Objective

- To identify and address the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian STI ecosystem to catalyse the socio-economic development of the country and also make the Indian STI ecosystem globally competitive.
- It aims to foster, develop, and nurture a robust system for evidence and stakeholder-driven STI planning, information, evaluation, and policy research in India.

## ISRO to adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Labs

### In news

ISRO to adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Labs across the country for mentorship and promoting STEM and Space Education

### Significance

This collaboration with ISRO will add great impetus to the opportunities provided by ATLs to young school students to learn in space technologies and innovate for the country

### Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL)

- It is a program run by Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog to foster curiosity and innovative mindset in young students across India to encourage research and innovation in schools across the country.
- The vision of the initiative is 'To create One million children in India as Neoteric Innovators'.

### STEM Education

The Space Foundation is building the next generation of space leaders and improving the overall quality of education through teacher, student and community programs that use space themes to improve students' interest and skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

## Ultra-high mobility electron gas

### In news

Scientists have produced electron gas with ultra-high mobility, which can speed up transfer of quantum information and signal from one part of a device to another and increase data storage and memory

### Details

- The need for attaining new functionalities in modern electronic devices has led to the manipulation of property of an electron called **spin degree of freedom** along with its charge.
- This has given rise to an altogether new field of spin-electronics or 'spintronics'. It has been realized that a phenomenon called the 'Rashba effect', which consists of splitting of spin-bands in an electronic system, might play a key role in spintronic devices.
- Scientists at **Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali (Punjab)**, an autonomous institution of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, have produced an ultra-high mobility **2d-electron gas(2DEG)** at the interface of two insulating oxide layers.

### Working

- Due to the high mobility of the electron gas, electrons do not collide inside the medium for a long distance and hence do not lose the memory and information.
- Hence, such a system can easily remember and transfer its memory for a long time and distance.
- In addition, since they collide less during their flow, their resistance is very low, and hence they don't dissipate energy as heat. So, such devices do not heat up easily and need less input energy to operate.

## Driverless Metro Car in India

### In news

Indigenously designed & developed state-of-the-art Driverless Metro trains are being manufactured at BEML Bangaluru Complex



## Highlights

- Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) project has 63 per cent indigenous content which will enhance to 75 per cent in next two to three years.
- Driver-less metro project will act as a source of inspiration to other Indian companies, particularly the defence industry to help India emerge as a manufacturing hub.
- Ministry of Defence has taken a number of steps like introducing Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020 and new Defence Acquisition Policy incorporating provisions for purchasing equipment and platforms with more indigenous technology.

## Possibilities in future

- MMRDA driver-less technology will lead to its expansion into other fields of defence such as tanks and fighter planes in the future.
- **The Ministry of Defence has taken a number of steps like introducing Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020 and new Defence Acquisition Policy incorporating provisions for purchasing equipment and platforms with more indigenous technology.**

## Chitra Flow Diverter stent

### In news

Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Govt. of India, under the Technical Research Centre (TRC), has entered into Technology Transfer Agreements with Pune based Biorad Medisys for two biomedical implant devices.

### Highlights

- The flexible flow diverter stent that allows accurate positioning of the device across the aneurysm developed by SCTIMST is the first one to be manufactured in India.
- The cost of the Chitra Flow Diverter stent is expected to be priced significantly lower than the currently imported ones.

### Significance of the device

The novel ASD occlude developed by SCTIMST promotes better healing of the hole in the heart and also has softer edge for minimizing the damage to adjacent tissue.

### Functioning of the device

- The delivery system has a novel release mechanism to enable smooth release of the device. The device is protected through two Indian patent applications, one international patent application, and design registration.
- It possesses kink resistance and improved radial strength through a novel braiding pattern making the device flexible and adaptable to the distortion of the vessel boundaries.
- The device is also provided with radio-opaque markers for radiographic visibility.

## Anomalous behaviour of bacterial colonies

### In news

Scientists have found a clue to dynamical origin of fluctuations in systems like fish schools, swarm of insects, flocking birds and bacterial colonies, which are called active matter systems.

## Significance

This understanding can be useful in nanotechnology applications like building small-scale energy-efficient bio-devices as well as biomedical applications like characterizing infection spread in organs, antibiotic resistance and so on.

## Finding

- Such systems are made up of self-driven components which extract energy from their surroundings to generate mechanical work.
- Due to continuous energy input, such systems are driven far from equilibrium and exhibit, unlike in equilibrium, fascinating collective behaviours, like clustering, “giant” mass fluctuations and anomalous transport.
- Particularly, their transport properties (molecular properties, analogous to viscosity, thermal conductivity and mobility that indicate the rate at which momentum, heat, and mass are transferred from one part of a system to another) can be perplexing at times.

## Analogy to understand the finding

- The anomalous behaviour of such systems can be understood by considering a cup of coffee, stirred with a spoon.
- If one stops stirring, the coffee will eventually come to rest, due to the internal viscous forces, which resist the fluid motion.
- In contrast, imagine “stirring” a bacterial solution, which, under suitable conditions (bacterial concentration), can exhibit perpetual or unceasing collective directed motion; in that case, the viscosity would vanish in such “active” bacterial fluids.

## AstroSat’s Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope spots rare ultraviolet-bright stars

### In news

AstroSat’s Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope spots rare ultraviolet-bright stars in a massive intriguing cosmic dinosaur in the Milky Way

### Findings

- It is said to have at least five generations of stars have spotted rare hot UV-bright stars in it.
- These stars whose inner core is almost exposed, making them very hot, exist in the late stages of evolution of a Sun-like star.
- It is not clear how these stars end their lives as not many of them are detected in these fast-evolving phases, making their study crucial.
- Astronomers distinguished the hot UV-bright stars from the relatively cooler red giant and main-sequence stars which appear dim in these images.
- About 34 UV-bright stars were found to be members of the globular cluster. From the data, the team derived the properties of these stars such as their surface temperatures, luminosities and radii.

## NICSI celebrates 25 years of its establishment

### In news

National Informatics Centre Services Incorporated (NICSI), a Public Sector Enterprise under National Informatics Centre (NIC), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), celebrated 25 years of its establishment.

## NIC Products Portfolio

### TEJAS

- The visual intelligence tool, through the collaborative effort of NIC and NICS (CEDA), is completely developed in-house using open source technologies and bringing together the best features comparable to market leading BI tools.
- The tool would be primarily used by Government Departments at various levels in the centre and state.
- It will provide State-of-the-art and powerful data analysis for officials to design analytical reports and turn data into accurate analysis and smart visualizations.

### e-Auction India

- It caters to the electronic forward and reverse auction requirements of the Government departments and organizations.
- It aims at transparency and non-discrimination amongst bidders, by allowing free access to auction documents, clarifications, online submission of quotes from any place on 24x7 basis, in a secured environment, adopting industry standard open technologies.

## Work from AnyWhere Portal

- WAW (Work from AnyWhere) Portal will ease and enhance accessibility of key applications to the Government employees.
- WAW portal is built upon core workplace experience and creates a highly extensible environment for users to dynamically adapt to changing needs.
- The virtual work environment, provisioned by WAW portal, will empower employees with all the key resources enabling them to access organizations' applications and data and communicate with fellow officials.
- With the following objectives to achieve, WAW portal will facilitate quick transition to remote workplace environment, while maintaining secured access to departmental applications.

## NICS

National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICS) was established in 1995 as a section-8 (erstwhile section-25) company under National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India for providing and procuring IT solutions for multiple e-governance projects undertaken by NIC, MeitY, Governments and Government Organizations (like Public Sector Undertakings).

# Health & Medicine

## Avian Influenza

### In news

Avian Influenza (AI) viruses have been circulating worldwide for centuries with four known major outbreaks recorded in the last century.

### Spread in India

- In India, the disease spreads mainly by migratory birds coming into India during winter months i.e. from September – October to February – March.
- The secondary spread by human handling (through fomites) cannot be ruled out.

### Support provided by the Department to the States/UTs include

- Technical support from referral lab i.e. ICAR-NIHSAD, Bhopal
- Funding support to States/UTs to undertake culling and compensation
- Funding to states under ASCAD scheme
- Training of veterinary work force
- Support for strengthening RDDs / CDDL

## Motor Bike Ambulance 'Rakshita

### In news

Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

### Features

- Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement.
- Other major features are the head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment with wireless monitoring capability and auto warning system for driver.
- The vital parameters of the patient can be monitored on the dashboard mounted LCD.
- It is also equipped with air splint, medical and oxygen kit for on spot medical care.

### Application

- The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency healthcare providers.
- It will provide life-saving aid for evacuation of injured patients from low intensity conflict areas.
- This will be handy in the congested streets and remote locations, where access through ambulance is difficult and time consuming.
- The bike can respond to a medical emergency need of patients faster than a four-wheeler due to its functionality and integrated emergency medical support system.
- This bike ambulance is useful not only for the paramilitary and military forces but has potential civil applications too.

## Environment & Ecology

### Analytical Quality Control exercise

### In news

Central Pollution Control Board organizes Analytical Quality Control exercise of 145 Environmental Laboratories for 9 trace metal parameters.

## Objective

To continuously monitor the accuracy and reliability of the analytical data generated by these laboratories, to help to improve the infrastructure of laboratories and the quality of data.

## Highlights

- The performance of each laboratory would be evaluated based on scores and the scorecards would be sent by the end of 31st of March 2021.
- The metals included in the 33rd AQC exercise are Total Arsenic (As), Cadmium (Cd), Total Chromium (Cr), Copper (Cu), Iron (Fe), Manganese (Mn), Nickel (Ni), Lead (Pb) and Zinc (Zn) for the assessment of pollution in air and water.

## Significance

- The AQC exercise will help evaluate the performance of participating laboratories in terms of analytical activities, the robustness of instruments used for sample analysis and the expertise of manpower engaged in the laboratory.
- It will also help to ensure the reliability of the analyzed data, for an informed and conclusive decision for the prevention and control of pollution.

## (NCAVES) India Forum-2021

### In news

Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of the Ecosystem Services (NCAVES) India Forum-2021 is being organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

### Implemented by

- MoSPI in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC).
- A web portal [www.ncavesindiaforum.in](http://www.ncavesindiaforum.in) has been designed for the purpose of registration, participation and to function as a repository for the environment related information.

### Aim

- To build a stronger awareness about the different perspective to Environment and to show a way forward towards realizing the contribution of the natural capital to achieve a **“better environment, better tomorrow”**.
- The Forum targets showcasing some of the important researches/work related to the environment through the online exhibition and the twitter poster session platform.

### The Project

**It will initiate pilot testing of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) with a view to**

- Improving the measurement of ecosystems and their services (both in physical and monetary terms) at the (sub)national level;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystems at (sub)national level policy planning and implementation;
- Contribute to the development of internationally agreed methodology and its use in partner countries.

**The project will have a duration until the end of 2021.**



## AI to help improve the air quality

### In news

Air Quality Commission ropes in top technical institutions to set up a Decision Support System

### Significance

- The System will use Artificial Intelligence(AI) to help improve the air quality over targeted sectors of Delhi /NCR
- This tool will help immensely in capturing the static and dynamic features of the emissions from various sources.
- It will have an integrated framework to handle both primary and secondary pollutants using chemical transport model.
- The system will also be able to handle the source specific interventions with the framework to estimate benefits of interventions and will focus on presenting the best results in a comprehensive user friendly and simple format for different users.

### Functioning

- The Air Quality Management **Decision Support Tool (DST)** integrates an emissions inventory development application and database; regional, local and source–receptor modelling; and Geographical Information System (GIS) based visualization tools in a software framework so as to build a robust system to formulate and implement source specific interventions to improve the air quality over targeted sectors of Delhi / NCR.
- Identification of source specific interventions by the DST is deliberated with the involvement of stake holders.
- The sources covered will include industries, transport, power plants, residential, DG sets, road dust, agricultural burning, refuse burning, construction dust, ammonia, volatile organic compounds, landfill etc.
- For instance, municipalities, industrial associations, industrial development authorities etc. would be the stake holders for identifying interventions related to waste burning, industrial source pollution, respectively.

**Air quality management** refers to all the activities a regulatory authority undertakes to help protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of **air pollution**. The process of **managing air quality** can be illustrated as a cycle of inter-related elements.

## New ant species discovered from Kerala

### In news

Two new species of a rare ant genus have been discovered in India.

### Details

- The species of the ant genus *Ooceraea* found in Kerala, and Tamil Nadu add to the diversity of this rare genus.
- They differ from others of the same genus on the basis of the number of antennal segments.
- New species are typically named after some distinguishing attribute or location but are often named after scientists as a means of honouring their research contributions to biology, especially in the fields of evolutionary and organismal biology, ecology or systematics.
- A team led by Prof. Himender Bharti of Punjabi University, Patiala, discovered the two new species, the first ones spotted with ten-segmented antennae among this rare genus. The discovery has been published in the journal *ZooKeys*.

- The genus is currently represented by 14 species of which eight possess nine-segmented antennae, while five possess eleven-segmented antennae and one species has recently been reported with eight-segmented antennae.
- In India, the genus was so far represented by two species with nine- and eleven-segmented antennae respectively.
- The newly discovered ant species with ten segmented antennae discovered, establish an old world lineage that contains a species emerging as the only model organism among the ant subfamily.

## Aqua Rejuvenation Plant

### In news

CSIR-CMERI unveils 'Aqua Rejuvenation Plant' which facilitates an Organic Farming Model through treated Waste Water.

### Aqua Rejuvenation Plant (ARP)

- It is an Integrated Waste Water Rejuvenation Model which has Six-Stage purification profile for comprehensive treatment of Waste Water, based upon diverse purification parameters.
- The approx 24,000 litres of Water that can be rejuvenated using ARP will be sufficient for almost 4 acres of Agricultural Land (barring seasonal variations in water requirements).
- The used filtration media have been specially developed to handle Indian Sewage Water Parameters and based upon Geographical Variations they may be modified.
- The filter media is also locally source-able, so as to ensure that there would not be any stress in the Supply Chain for scaled-up Manufacturing of ARP.

### Uses

- The treated water, which is now being used for irrigation, can be used even for drinking purpose also when little more time is given for settling.
- The system has dual benefit as while the treated water is being used for irrigation purpose, the filtered sludge generated is also utilized as manure / fertilizer.
- The bio char prepared from dry leaves falling in autumn season is also used for mixing in soil as it reduces the water requirement for irrigation thus saving precious water.

## Climate Adaptation Summit 2021

### In news

The online international Climate Adaptation Summit (CAS) 2021 on 25 and 26 January, hosted by the Netherlands, convened global leaders and local stakeholders

### India's action

- We are targeting 450 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- We are promoting LED lights and saving 38 million tons of carbon-di-oxide emissions annually.
- We are going to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- We are providing clean cooking fuel to 80 million rural households.
- We are connecting 64 million households to piped water supply.
- And, our initiatives have not been restricted to India alone.

## National Baseline Geoscience Data Generation Programmes

### In news

To expedite exploration activities in the country, Geological Survey of India (GSI), has embarked upon an ambitious scheme to complete some major National level surveys by 2024: **National Geochemical Mapping (NGCM), National Geophysical Mapping (NGPM), National Aero Geophysical Mapping Program (NAGMP)**.

### Aim

It aims at integrating the collected data by GSI and the similar organizations to build a repository on the digital medium entailing multiple user access.

### Highlights

- GSI is also going to adopt sophisticated deep penetration geophysical techniques such as Magneto-Telluric Surveys and Deep Seismic Reflection Surveys (DSRS) in order to define the crustal architecture for deep seated mineral targeting.
- GSI has also initiated its flagship initiative of National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) for collation of all the geoscience data of the country involving GSI, other national organizations with geoscience as a focused activities, all the state directorate of mines and geology, the academia engaged in research and development in the domain, the CPSEs engaged in exploration and geoscientific pursuits, and private sector agencies working in the domain.

### Significance

- The collation, assimilation and integration of the data generated from the above projects and further interpretation will lead to identification of more areas for mineral exploration in the country. .
- The increased investment in mineral exploration will build a robust pipeline of prospective mineral blocks for auction.
- This will ensure long-term viability and continuity of mining in the country taking India towards the cherished goal of '**Atmanirbhar Bharat**'.

## Year of Indo-French alliance towards a Greener Planet

### In news

Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Prakash Javadekar and Ms Barbara Pompili, the French Minister for Ecological Transition launched the Indo-French Year of the Environment

### Objective

To strengthen Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favor of global environment protection and give them greater visibility.

### Major themes

Environmental protection, climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainable urban development, and the development of renewable energies and energy efficiency.

### India's achievement

- India has made significant progress towards climate change action & has already achieved 26% of reduction of emission intensity.
- As of 2020 the renewable capacity in India stands at 90 GW which includes 36 GW of solar energy & 38 GW of wind energy.

# International Relation

## India and Japan Sign MoU in the Field of ICT

### In news

India and Japan signed MoU to enhance cooperation in the field of Information and Communications Technologies

### Objective

Under this MoU, the Telecom department of India and the Ministry of Communications of Japan will enhance the mutual cooperation in the field of telecom security, 5G technologies, spectrum management, submarine optical fiber cable system to Indian islands, a high-altitude platform for broadband in unconnected areas, disaster management and public safety, smart cities, etc.

### Key Highlights

- Connecting Andaman & Nicobar with the submarine optical fiber cable and mentioned it as a great example of cooperation between India and Japan.
- India's rapid adoption of innovative digital technologies during the pandemic such as the rapid growth of digital payments, the Aarogya Setu tracing App, digital hearings in the courts of India.
- During the pandemic, because of the attractive policies of India such as SPECS and PLI, there has been a large investment in the field of electronics manufacturing.

## First India-EU IPR dialogue

### In news

The 1st India-EU IPR dialogue was held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 between the EU Commission and Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) through a virtual platform.

### Aim

To further strengthen the India-EU relation & facilitate enhanced cooperation in the field of Intellectual Property Rights.

### Topic of discussion

- Directive on Copyright in the digital market keeping in pace with changing demands of industry.
- On Trademark, they presented the details about the dual system available in the region which provides flexibility to the owners.
- There were discussions on plant protection and farmer's right and their importance for Indian economy.
- Key intellectual property issues that affect business entities and to identify areas for closer collaboration for mutual benefit of both economies.

## 5TH India – Singapore Defence Ministers' Dialogue

### In news

The 5<sup>th</sup> Defence Ministers' Dialogue (DMD) between India and Singapore was successfully held on 20 January 2021 through a video conference

## Key points

- During the virtual interaction, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh conveyed his compliments to his Singaporean counterpart on the effectiveness of the pandemic mitigation measures implemented in the nation and the contribution of the Singapore Armed Forces in restricting the spread of COVID-19.
- The Defence Minister also highlighted the role of the Indian Armed Forces in combating COVID-19 and various missions undertaken to assist in the repatriation of Indians stranded overseas.
- Singaporean Defence Minister Dr. Ng Eng Hen reciprocated the compliments and exchanged views on the role of the Armed Forces in the whole of government's approach towards control of the pandemic.
- The two ministers also expressed satisfaction at the growing defence ties between the two countries.
- They also reviewed the progress of various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives being pursued between the two nations over the last year and expressed commitment to further boost the scale of engagements between the Armed Forces as well as in areas such as industry and defence technology.
- The two ministers further discussed new areas of potential cooperation and articulated their vision in this direction.

## Act East policy

### Why in news?

In Asia Pacific Youth Exchange (APYE) meet union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, PM's vision of "Act East" imparting a new approach in our relations with neighbouring countries

### Act East

India's 'Act East' policy is a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.

### Objectives of "Act East Policy"

- Promote economic cooperation, cultural ties, and develop a strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at regional, bilateral, and multilateral levels.
- To increase the interaction of the **North-Eastern Indian states with other neighboring countries.**
- To find out the alternatives of the traditional business partners like; more focus on the Pacific countries in addition to the South East Asian countries.

### Background

The country's eastward drive since 1992 has underscored the importance of this region in its contemporary international relations. 'Act East' and its early avatar, 'Look East' are not different; rather, they are two sides of the same coin, representing two different, but continuing phases in the evolution of India's policy towards the Asia-Pacific region.

### Key differences between "Look East Policy" and "Act East Policy"

The focus of the "Look East Policy" was to increase **economic integration** with the South East Asian countries and the area was just confined to South East Asia only. On the other hand the focus of the "Act East Policy" is **economic and security integration** and the focus area increased to **South East Asia as well as East Asia.**

## SAMPRIITI – IX

### In news

A joint military training exercise between India and Bangladesh 'SAMPRIITI-IX' will be conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya from 3<sup>rd</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> February, 2020.



- The exercise is **hosted alternately by both countries**.
- The **eighth edition** of the exercise was conducted at **Tangail, Bangladesh**.

### Objective

- The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen and broaden the interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh's armies.
- Another objective of this exercise is to strengthen and expand the aspects of mutual cooperation between both armies.
- The exercise will comprise strategic level action to deal with terrorism and terrorist attacks.
- This exercise will also create a strong military partnership and military trust between the two countries.

## 12th South Asia Conference

### In news

The 12th edition of the annual South Asia Conference was held on 28-29 January 2020 in New Delhi

### Theme:

India's "Neighbourhood First" Policy: Regional Perceptions.

### The South Asia Conference

- The Institute organizes it for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.
- The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) is a New Delhi based premier think tank of India.
- It has been engaged in research on defence and security related issues of south Asia in particular and world in general.
- Our yearly south Asia conference is an endeavour of the institute to bring together experts from all south Asian countries and discuss with them issues of contemporary relevance in an increasingly interdependent South Asia.
- Since the countries in the South Asian region not only share many features of governance and structures but face similar challenges, the IDSA conferences have attempted to engage policy makers, scholars and grassroots activists to dialogue on key concerns with the objective to achieve sustainable peace and security.

## Schemes & Policies

### 46 Food Processing Projects Operationalized

#### In news

Ministry of Food Processing Industries has taken numerous initiatives for development of food processing sector

#### Major achievements and initiatives

##### **Creation of Infrastructure Facilities**

A total of 46 food processing projects were completed/operationalised

##### **Approval of New Infrastructure Facilities**

- A total of 134 food processing projects were sanctioned.

##### **COVID-19 initiatives and Grievances Redressal**

- Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has been taking several initiatives for maintaining steady growth of food processing sector. Alike many sectors, food processing sector also went through several hitches during the lockdown. Critical issues such as reduction in processing capacity due to plant shutdowns, disruption in logistics and movement of workers, labor availability at manufacturing sites as well as steep drop in demand, liquidity crunch impacted the sector.

### Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

Ministry of Food Processing Industries launched an all India centrally sponsored **PM Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme** for providing financial, technical and business support for upgradation of existing micro food processing enterprises. It is to be implemented for a period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25 with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crores.

## 5th National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy

### In news

The draft of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Science Technology and Innovation Policy has been finalized and is now available for public consultation

### Aim

To foster, develop, and nurture a robust system for evidence and stakeholder-driven STI planning, information, evaluation, and policy research in India.

### Objective

To identify and address strengths and weaknesses of the Indian STI ecosystem to catalyse socio-economic development of the country and also make the Indian STI ecosystem globally competitive.

### Highlights

- The STIP will be guided by its broad vision of achieving technological self-reliance and position India among the top three scientific superpowers in the decade to come.
- It will focus to attract, nurture, strengthen and retain critical human capital through a 'people centric' science, technology and innovation (STI) ecosystem, to double the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) researchers, Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) and private sector contribution to the GERD every 5 years and to build individual and institutional excellence in STI with the aspiration to achieve the highest level of global recognitions and awards in the coming decade.
- The new policy, STIP, revolves around the core principles of being decentralized, evidence-informed, bottom-up, experts-driven, and inclusive.
- It aims to bring in the concept of 'dynamic policy' with a robust policy governance mechanism incorporating features such as implementation strategy, periodic review, policy evaluation, feedback, and adaptation, and most importantly, a timely exit strategy for various policy instruments.

## Kisan Kalyan Mission

### In news

Yogi govt to felicitate 100 progressive farmers in each district during 3-month long Kisan Kalyan Mission.

## Aims

To double the farmer income covering all the Assembly constituencies of the state of Uttar Pradesh, which will be achieved through campaigns that create awareness among farmers on how to reduce agricultural caused by using fertilizers in a balanced manner.

## Highlights

- The mission will also encourage farmers to time their cultivation of crops according to the demand of the market.
- Under the mission several programmes such as exhibition of agriculture and associate sector including products of MSME missions and livelihood missions are to be launched.

## Global Housing Technology Challenge

### In news

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

### Light House Project

- They are being constructed at Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).
- They comprise about 1000 houses at each location along with allied infrastructure facilities.
- These projects will demonstrate and deliver ready to live houses at an expedited pace within twelve months, as compared to conventional brick and mortar construction, and will be more economical, sustainable, of high quality and durability.
- These LHPs demonstrate a variety of technologies, including Prefabricated Sandwich Panel System in LHP at Indore, Monolithic Concrete Construction using Tunnel Formwork etc.

### Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)

- Global Housing Technology Challenge was launched in 2019.
- The challenge is undertaken under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U).
- GHTC aims to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 2 crore houses by 2022.
- GHTC focuses on identifying and mainstreaming proven demonstrable technologies for lighthouse projects and spotting potential future technologies for incubation and acceleration support through ASHA (Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators) — India.

## EDUCON-2020

### In news

Union Education Minister inaugurates two-day Virtual International Akhand Conference '**EDUCON-2020**'

### Significance

- This two-day Akhand Conference will pass on the message to the researchers and students across the globe that the research is a 24X7 exercise and requires strong perseverance.
- It will help the prospective teachers to become familiar with different technologies and their functioning to bring transformational change in the field of education.

- It will help in preparing a roadmap for effective implementation of NEP-2020 and developing necessary skill-set among youngsters to enable them to contribute towards building an **AtmaNirbhar Bharat**.
- This Conference will provide a platform to researchers and educationists to share their views on drawing strategic-plan for implementing the recommendations of the student-centric National Education Policy-2020, which is rooted in our Indian Culture and Value System.

### Focus

Conference will focus, from the global perspectives, on various paradigms of NEP-2020, intended to transform the 'learning system of our nation' to meet world standard by empowering youth with the global competencies- thereby realizing the vision of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

## Crop Insurance Scheme- The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yajana

### In news

Crop Insurance Scheme- The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yajana (PMFBY) successfully completes 5 Years of operations on 13th January 2021

### Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

Crop Insurance Scheme is in line with One Nation – One Scheme theme. It incorporates the best features of all previous schemes and at the same time, all previous shortcomings / weaknesses have been removed.

### Objectives

- To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
- To stabilise the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
- To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
- To ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

## Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

### In news

The third phase of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0) is launched in 600 districts across all states of India

### Highlights

- Skill India Mission PMKVY 3.0 envisages training of eight lakh candidates over a scheme period of 2020-2021 with an outlay of Rs. 948.90 crore.
- The 729 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs), empaneled non-PMKK training centres and more than 200 ITIs under Skill India will be rolling out PMKVY 3.0 training to build a robust pool of skilled professionals.
- On the basis of the learning gained from PMKVY 1.0 and PMKVY 2.0, the Ministry has improved the newer version of the scheme to match the current policy doctrine and energize the skilling ecosystem affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation.
- The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.

- Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

## Pension Payment Order

### In news

The recently-introduced electronic pension payment order (e-PPO) promises ease of living for senior citizens.

### Issue

- The Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare in the ministry was often at the receiving end of complaints from senior citizens about the original copies of their pension payment order getting misplaced.
- "In such situations, the pensioners, particularly the older pensioners, had to face several hardships.

### Solution

Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare decided to integrate the electronic PPO generated through PFMS application of CGA (Controller General of Accounts) with Digi-locker.

### Significance

This enables the pensioner to obtain an instant print - out of the latest copy of his PPO from the Digi-locker account.

### Pension Payment Order (PPO)

It is a unique number or a code provided to the pensioners of employees' pension scheme (EPS) to help them to get a pension after retirement. PPO and is allotted by the EPFO to every employee who retires from any organisation.

## Iron-ore Policy 2021

### In news

Ministry of Railways rolls out a new iron ore policy governing allocation of rakes and transportation of iron ore.

### Aim

To attune it to the present day needs of customers and to meet the complete requirement of transportation of iron ore customers and provide total logistics support to steel industry to meet the competitive challenges.

### Highlights

- Production of steel is critically dependent on transportation of iron and other raw materials.
- The policy sets down clear guidelines on how to fully meet the requirement of customers by leveraging infrastructure facilities available at loading and unloading ends to the fullest.
- The new policy has been named as 'Iron-ore Policy 2021' and shall come into effect from 10.02.2021.
- The provisions of the new policy will be updated in the Rake Allotment System module by CRIS.
- Categorization of Priority of movement of Iron Ore has now been based on the availability of Railway infrastructure developed by the customer for loading/unloading and the nature of movement between various types of sidings with a view to maximize iron-ore movement by rail.

### Iron Ore and Indian Railways

- Iron-ore is the second most important stream of traffic of Railways and along with steel accounts for nearly 17% (53.81 Million Tonne of Steel & 153.35 Million Tonne of Iron ore) of total 1210 Million Tonne freight loading of IR in 2019-20.



- The new Iron-ore Policy, 2021 issued by Ministry of Railways is expected to have positive impact on the steel industry, provide powerful impetus to the core sector of the economy and boost country's economic growth.

## Jal Utsav

### In news

Madhya Pradesh village celebrates 'Jal Utsav' to welcome tap water connection

### Highlights

- The festivities included tribal songs, dance & music which filled the whole atmosphere with the spirit of joy.
- The village which mostly comprises of tribal population has suffered paucity of potable water in their area since ever.
- But now, it's a double dip of celebration for them as the availability of tap water has provided 'ease of living' to the community as well as has brought their revered river Narmada to their homes.

### Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), the flagship programme of Union Government is ensuring safe drinking water to every rural household of the country.
- Jal Jeevan Mission envisages adoption of participatory approach for ensuring safe and sustainable rural water supply for every household.
- In this light Madhya Pradesh Jal Nigam is implementing 58 Multi Village Schemes (MVS) in about 6,896 villages in 34 districts to ensure the availability of water for drinking and other domestic purposes throughout the year.

### Objectives

- To provide FHTC to every rural household.
- To prioritize provision of FHTCs in quality affected areas, villages in drought prone and desert areas, Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) villages, etc.
- To provide functional tap connection to Schools, Anganwadi centres, GP buildings, Health centres, wellness centres and community buildings
- To monitor functionality of tap connections.
- To promote and ensure voluntary ownership among local community by way of contribution in cash, kind and/ or labour and voluntary labour (shramdaan)
- To assist in ensuring sustainability of water supply system, i.e. water source, water supply infrastructure, and funds for regular O&M
- To empower and develop human resource in the sector such that the demands of construction, plumbing, electrical, water quality management, water treatment, catchment protection, O&M, etc. are taken care of in short and long term
- To bring awareness on various aspects and significance of safe drinking water and involvement of stakeholders in manner that make water everyone's business

## Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin

### In news

PM releases financial assistance to over 6 lakh beneficiaries in UP under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin

### Highlights

- Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana was launched on 1 June 2015 to provide affordable housing to the urban poor.

- It is a Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS), which means beneficiaries under PMAY scheme are eligible for interest subsidy if they avail a loan to buy or construct a house.
- The mission of this scheme is to provide housing to all by the end of 2022.

### Features & Benefits of PMAY Gramin Scheme

- It promotes housing facilities in all rural areas in India except Delhi and Chandigarh.
- The main objective of this scheme is to assist the applicants in constructing a pucca house.
- This scheme aims to construct 4 crore houses for the rural poor by 2022.
- The budget for this scheme is ₹ 81,975 crore

## 24th “Hunar Haat”

### In news

Ministry of Minority Affairs is organising the 24<sup>th</sup> “Hunar Haat” at Avadh Shilpgram, Lucknow (UP) from 22<sup>nd</sup> January to 04<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

### Theme:

**“Vocal for Local”**

### Hunar Haat

It is an exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products made by artisans from the minority communities. Organised by ministry of minority affairs under “USTTAD” scheme at different parts of the country.

### Aim

To provide market exposure and employment opportunities to artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.

### Significance

“Hunar Haat” have become a successful mission to provide employment and employment opportunities and national as well international markets for thousands of master artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts.

### USTTAD SCHEME

**USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme** aims to preserve heritage of traditional arts and crafts of minority communities and build capacity of traditional craftspersons and artisans and establish linkages of traditional skills with the global market.

## Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Achievements

### Why in news?

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme Increases Awareness and Sensitize the Masses on Gender Equality

### Achievements so far

#### Sex Ratio at Birth

- Promising trends of improvement in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) have been observed at National level. SRB has improved by 16 points from 918 (2014-15) to 934 (2019-20), as per the HMIS data of MoH&FW.
- Out of 640 districts covered under BBBP 422 districts have shown improvement in SRB from 2014-15 to 2018-2019.
- Some Districts which had very low SRB in 2014-15 have shown huge improvement after implementation of the Scheme such as Mau (Uttar Pradesh) from 694 (2014-15) to 951 (2019-20), Karnal (Haryana) from 758

(2014-15) to 898 (2019-20), Mahendergarh (Haryana) from 791 (2014-15) to 919 (2019-20), Rewari (Haryana) from 803 (2014-15) to 924 (2019-20), and Patiala (Punjab) from 847 (2014-15) to 933 (2019-20),

#### Health

- Percentage of 1st Trimester ANC Registration has shown an improving trend from 61% in 2014-15 to 71% in 2019-20 (As per HMIS, MoH&FW).
- Percentage of Institutional Deliveries has shown an improving trend from 87% in 2014-15 to 94% in 2019-20 (As per HMIS, MoH&FW).

#### Education

- Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls in the schools at secondary level has improved from 77.45 (2014-15) to 81.32 (2018-19-provisional figures) as per UDISE-data.
- Percentage of schools with functional separate toilets for girls has shown improvement from 92.1% in 2014-15 to 95.1% in 2018-19 (2018-19 provisional figure, as per UDISE-data)

#### Attitudinal change

- The BBBP scheme has been able to bring the focus on important issue of female infanticide, lack of education amongst girls and deprivation of their rights on a life cycle continuum. The scheme has successfully engaged with Community to defy the age old biases against the girl child and introduce innovative practices to celebrate the girl child.

## Ayushman CAPF' scheme

#### In news

Union Home Minister launched 'Ayushman CAPF' scheme for personnel and dependents of Central Armed Police Forces during a function in Guwahati, Assam

#### Key features

- Comprehensive coverage of OPD, IPD and follow-ups
- Cashless treatment at empaneled private hospitals
- Portability to ensure access to health services across the country
- Paperless to ensure ease and convenience
- Dedicated call center for support and grievance redressal
- Well defined set of health benefits packages
- Pan India expansion of the scheme will be done in phased manner

## "AYU SAMVAD" Campaign

#### In news

**AYU SAMVAD(My Health My Responsibility)** is one of the **largest public awareness campaign** program on **AYURVEDA and COVID 19 PANDEMIC, organized by All India Institute of Ayurveda New Delhi**

#### Objective of the Campaign

- The main objective of the campaign is to create awareness through Lecture series to make common people aware about the theme "Ayurveda for COVID 19 Pandemic".
- This campaign ensures the uniformity of information through a structured PPT delivered to approximately 01 crore target audience across India through 05 Lakh lectures.
- This campaign will be immensely beneficial in understanding the importance of Ayurveda & in the fight against COVID 19 & also for Post Covid Management.

- This campaign will specifically focus on the Role of Preventive, Promotive, Curative and Rehabilitation in Management of COVID 19 through Ayurveda.
- Campaign will monitor through State AYUSH Directors & NAM team. The report of the Documentation part of lectures & various activities will be submitted by state AYUSH Director in first week of May 2021.

### Highlights

- More than 5 lac lectures will be organized across the nation by Ayurveda Physicians for citizens of India.
- All India Institute of Ayurveda has drafted a power point presentation & booklet for reference.
- The trained personnel's will further organize lectures for Government Offices, Non-Government sector employees, schools, colleges, panchayati raj institutions, gram sabhas, industries, various housing societies, NGOs, Mahila udyogs, Asha workers and health staff etc across India.

## STARS project

### In news

Agreement for the financial support of the implementation of Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project of Ministry of Education was signed between Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and World Bank along with Ministry of Education.

### Highlights

- STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), MOE.
- Earlier Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of STARS project on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020.
- The project covers 6 States viz Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha.
- The identified States will be supported for various interventions for improving the quality of education.
- The Program envisions improving the overall monitoring and measurement activities in the Indian school education system through interventions in selected states.
- STARS will draw on existing structure under Samagra Shiksha with the DoSEL, MoE as the main implementing agency at the national level.
- At the State level, the project will be implemented through the integrated State Implementation Society (SIS) for Samagra Shiksha.

## Defence & Security

### Indian Air Force to get 83 Tejas fighter jets

### In news

After securing French multirole fighter aircraft Rafale, the Indian Air Force (IAF) will soon get 83 indigenously designed Tejas LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) fighter jets and 10 trainer aircraft.

### Highlights

- The LCA-Tejas is going to be the backbone of the IAF fighter fleet in years to come.

- The Tejas Mk-1A Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) is a made in India fourth-generation fighter aircraft with critical operational capabilities that include active electronically-scanned array (AESA) radar, an electronic warfare (EW) suite, and is capable of air-to-air refueling (AAR).
- The Tejas single-seat, single-engine, lightweight, high-agility supersonic fighter aircraft manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) entered service with the Indian Air Force (IAF) in July 2016.
- The aircraft's design and development programme was led by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) of the Indian Department of Defence, with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) as the prime industrial contractor.

## India's First Indigenously Developed 9mm Machine Pistol

### In news

India's first indigenous 9mm Machine Pistol has been jointly developed by DRDO and Indian Army

### Highlights

- The Machine Pistol fires the in-service 9mm ammunition and sports an upper receiver made from aircraft grade Aluminium and lower receiver from carbon fibre.
- 3D Printing process has been used in designing and prototyping of various parts including trigger components made by metal 3D printing.
- The weapon has huge potential in Armed forces as personal weapon for heavy weapon detachments, commanders, tank and aircraft crews, drivers/dispatch riders, radio/radar operators, Closed Quarter Battle, counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations etc.
- The Machine Pistol is likely to have production cost under rupees 50000 each and has potential for exports.
- The weapon is aptly named "**Asmi**" meaning "Pride", "Self-Respect" & "**Hard Work**".

## Aero India-21 Review

### In news

Aero India 2021 is a keenly anticipated event which is now being conducted as a Business event from 03<sup>rd</sup> to 05<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### Highlights

- This three day event is unique as it will be the World's first Hybrid exhibition wherein the Business element of the event will be both physical as well as virtual.
- Aero India-21 is now being held simultaneously as a Physical Exhibition and a Virtual Exhibition with Stalls being provided in both the physical and virtual realms which will result in greater engagement and the exhibitors will experience a greater outreach catering to those who could not join the event physically.
- Aero India-21 mobile app was also launched which will be the handy interactive interface for all issues related to the event and promises to provide a hassle free entry to the venue.
- Aero India being one of the Major International Aerospace and Defence (A&D) exhibitions, requires active participation, shared responsibility and synchronised efforts at all levels.

### Aero India Show

- Aero India exhibition is organized every alternate year. It is one of the major exhibition for aerospace and defence industries with a public air show.
- It enables industry professional to gain market insights, announce new developments and gain media coverage. Aero India offers a unique platform to international aviation sector to bolster business.

- Aero India 2021 is the 13 th edition of Aero India being organised at Bengaluru, Karnataka from 03 - 05 February 2021.
- Aero India 2021 provides opportunity to demonstrate products to the potential customer and investors.
- In Aero India 2021 Exhibitors are likely to showcase their products using latest technologies to the potential customers.
- This is an important international event likely to be attended by thousands of business visitors and lakh general visitors.

## Indo-French Exercise Desert Knight-21

### In news

Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force (Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace) will conduct a bilateral Air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21 at Air Force Station Jodhpur from 20 to 24 Jan 21

### Participants

- French side will participate with Rafale, Airbus A-330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT), A-400M Tactical Transport aircraft and approximately 175 personnel.
- The Indian Air Force aircraft participating in the exercise will include Mirage 2000, Su-30 MKI, Rafale, IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft, AWACS and AEW&C aircraft.

### Highlights

- The exercise marks an important milestone in the series of engagements between the two Air forces. As part of Indo-French defence cooperation
- Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force have held six editions of Air Exercises named 'Garuda', the latest being in 2019 at Air Force Base Mont-de-Marsan, France.
- As measures to further the existing cooperation, the two forces have been gainfully utilising available opportunities to conduct 'hop-exercises'.
- 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.

## Exercise Kavach

### In news

The three wings of the Indian armed forces will be holding a massive joint military exercise 'Excercise Kavach' next week, the defence ministry said.

### Highlights

- It will be conducted under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), the only Joint Forces Command of the country.
- The exercise would involve participation and deployment of elements of Army's Amphibious Brigade along with supporting forces including Special Forces of Navy, Armour/Mechanised components, Naval Ships comprising Destroyers, ASW Corvettes and Landing Ships with ship-borne helicopters of Eastern Naval Command and ANC, Jaguar Maritime Strike and Transport aircrafts from Indian Air Force and assets of Coast Guard.
- The exercise involves synergised application of maritime surveillance assets, coordinated air and maritime strikes, air defence, submarine and landing operations.
- The tri-services exercise involves synergised application of maritime surveillance assets, coordinated air and maritime strikes, air defence, submarine and landing operations.



- The ISR exercise will validate the capabilities of intelligence gathering from space, air, land and sea-based assets/ sensors, its analysis and sharing to achieve battle field transparency for quick decision making at different stages of operations,

## Smart Anti Airfield Weapon from Hawk-i aircraft

### In news

DRDO successfully conducted captive and release trial of indigenously developed Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) from Hawk-i aircraft of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) off the Odisha coast

### Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW)

- The DRDO Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) is a long-range precision-guided anti-airfield weapon currently developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It is designed to be capable of engaging ground targets with high precision up to a range of 100 kilometres (62 mi).
- The SAAW project was approved by the Government of India in 2013.
- The first successful test of the weapon was conducted in May 2016. Another successful test was conducted in November of the following year.
- This was followed by a series of three successful tests in December 2017.
- Between 16 and 18 August 2018, three successful tests were conducted, which brought the total number of tests to eight.
- In September 2020, the SAAW was approved for procurement by the Indian government for the Navy and the Air Force.

### Hawk aircraft

**It is a tandem seat aircraft developed by HAL. The aircraft has an integrated attack system and radio and inertial navigation system. It is spin resistant.**

## Successful Maiden Test Launch of Akash-NG Missile

### In news

DRDO conducted the successful maiden launch of Akash-NG (New Generation) Missile from Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha on 25 January 2021

### Highlights

- Indian Air Force a new generation Surface to Air Missile means Akash-NG for use with an aim of intercepting high maneuvering low RCS aerial threats.
- The missile intercepted the target with text book precision. The launch met all the test objectives by performing high maneuvers during the trajectory.
- The performance of the Command and Control system, onboard avionics and aerodynamic configuration of the missile was successfully validated during the trial.
- During the test launch, entire flight path of the missile was monitored and the flight data was captured by various Range instruments such as Radar, EOTS and Telemetry systems deployed by ITR, Chandipur.
- The Multi Function Radar was tested for its capability of integration with the system.
- The Akash-NG system has been developed with better deployability compared to other similar systems with canisterized launcher and much smaller ground system footprint.
- The test launch was carried out by a combined team of DRDO, BDL & BEL in the presence of the representatives of Indian Airforce.

## Joint Military Exercise in Andaman Sea

### In news

Indian Armed Forces conducted a large-scale conjoint military training exercise “KAVACH” alongwith “AMPHEX-21” in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal

### Aim

To validate air dominance and maritime strike capability within the area of interest in Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Prior to amphibious landing operations, troops of the Army, Navy and Air Force were mobilised and transported by sea and air in close coordination with all agencies.

### Highlights

- The exercise was conducted under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) with participation of Eastern Naval Command (ENC) and Army Southern Command (SC) involving assets of Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.
- The exercise involved participation and deployment of all forces of ANC, elements of Amphibious Brigade of Army's Southern Command along with corvettes, submarine and amphibious landing ships of Navy's Eastern Fleet and Marine Commandos.
- Jaguar Maritime Strike and transport aircraft from Indian Air Force and assets of Coast Guard also participated.

## Miscellaneous

### National Energy Conservation awards 2020

#### In news

Indian Railways bags 13 awards at the 'National Energy Conservation awards 2020

#### Highlights

- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency to those organisations that put in special efforts to reduce energy consumption gives these awards.
- These awards have been given to Indian Railways' zones and workshops for significant improvements in energy conservation by adopting various measures to promote energy efficiency

#### National Energy Conservation Awards

- The Ministry of Power, Government of India has launched a scheme in 1991, to give national recognition through awards to industries and establishments that have taken special efforts to reduce energy consumption while maintaining their production.
- The awards were given away for the first time on December 14, 1991, which was declared as the 'National Energy Conservation Day'.
- These awards are given by eminent dignitaries holding very high positions in the Government of India in a function organized on 14th December every year.
- In line with the previous years, the Ministry of Power, Govt. of India, has decided to organize the “National Energy Conservation Award 2020” to recognize the efforts of various industrial units / establishments / organizations who have achieved efficient utilization and conservation of energy.

## SKOCH Challenger Award

### In news

Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda is honoured with the SKOCH Challenger Award in a virtual ceremony on January 16, 2021

### SKOCH Challenger Awards

- SKOCH Challenger Awards, instituted in 2003, salute people, projects and institutions that went the extra mile to make India a better nation.
- SKOCH Challenger Awards – the highest independently instituted civilian honours – have been conferred, the mighty and the ordinary have shared this platform for their extraordinary achievements in contributing to the society.
- The SKOCH Challenger Awards cover the best of efforts in the area of digital, financial and social inclusion.
- They encompass the best of governance, look at excellence in academics, change management, inclusive growth, citizen services delivery, capacity building, empowerment and other such softer issues that get normally lost in the glamour and the glitz of industry-sponsored or advertising focused jamborees

### Highlights

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has digitalised the entire scholarship release process
- All 5 scholarship schemes have been digitalised as per DBT Mission mandate.
- 13 schemes are on Ministry dashboard, 6 initiatives are on Prayas PMO dashboard.
- Making the entire scholarship release process online has enabled 64 lakh beneficiaries to receive scholarships directly into their accounts through DBT.

### Ice-Stupa

- It is a unique project to solve water problem in Ladakh region which faces shortage due to climate change.
- It is a way to store frozen melt water in the winter which can be used during the spring sowing season.
- The structure is built comprising of locally found material with large water retention capacity, which looks like Stupa.
- “26 such Ice-Stupas were establish in 2019-20, which stored about 60 million litre of water.
- More than 35 villages have been benefitted from this already.
- The projects is owned by the community and is scaling up to include another 25 Stupas”.

## Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2021

### In news

To recognize and honour the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organizations in India in the field of Disaster Management, Government of India has instituted an annual award known as Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar.

### Highlights

- The award is announced every year on 23rd January, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- The award carries a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh and a certificate in case of an institution and Rs. 5 lakh and a certificate in case of an individual.
- For the award this year, nominations were solicited from 1st July, 2020 onwards.
- The award scheme for the year 2021 was given wide publicity through print, electronic and social media.
- In response to the award scheme, 371 valid nominations were received from institutions and individuals.

## Award for 2021

- Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (in the institutional category)
- Dr. Rajendra Kumar Bhandari (in the Individual category) have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for their excellent work in Disaster Management.

## Agri-hackathon Atmanirbhar Krishi

### In news

Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, inaugurated the Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 organised by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare in association with IARI, Pusa.

### Highlights

- The 2-month long event is the first of its kind & the largest virtual event in the history of Indian agriculture.
- It will bring together the most important stakeholders from industry & government alongside India's young bright minds, creative startups and smart innovators who will build new, fast and frugal solutions to tackle the big questions we're facing today.
- The hackathon will happen in 3 elimination rounds and the final 24 winners will get a cash prize of INR 1,00,000 along with incubation support, tech & business mentoring and various other benefits.
- The hackathon will accept innovations & ideas on farm mechanization, precision agriculture, supply chain & food technology, waste to wealth, green energy, etc.

### Objective

From the biggest names to the most exciting startups, from learning, innovating to pitching, Agri India Hackathon will unfold incredible things in a never-before virtual experience.

**The goal:** Collective impact with new-age, fast & frugal innovations to navigate these focus areas.

## PARAKRAM DIWAS

### In news

Government of India has decided to celebrate the 125th Birth Anniversary year of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a befitting manner at national and international level, beginning from 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

### Highlights

- Government of India has decided to celebrate his birthday on the day of January every year as 'PARAKRAM DIWAS'
- It is celebrated in order to honour and remember Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation.
- And to inspire people of the country, especially the youth, to act with fortitude in the face of adversity as Netaji did, and to infuse in them a spirit of patriotic fervour.
- The Union Ministry of Culture made the announcement.

### Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

- Subhas Chandra Bose, affectionately called as Netaji, was one of the most prominent leaders of Indian freedom struggle.
- Though Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have garnered much of the credit for successful culmination of Indian freedom struggle, the contribution of Subash Chandra Bose is no less.

- He has been denied his rightful place in the annals of Indian history. He founded Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) to overthrow British Empire from India and came to acquire legendary status among Indian masses.

## New findings in number theory

### In news

Interesting new findings on theoretical speculations in number theory may soon emerge from India

### Highlights

- Scientists are working on new cases of Stark conjectures, hypothetical information about the leading terms of L-functions in number theory.
- These conjectures have direct applications to Hilbert's 12th problem, one of the central problems in algebraic number theory.
- This theory has significance in cryptography, for instance, for generating elliptic curves for use in cryptosystems.

### Number theory

- It concerns the study of integer solutions to polynomial equations with integer coefficients. Solving such equations, in general, is challenging.
- They are studied by attaching various invariants-- function, quantity, or property, which remains unchanged when a specific transformation is applied.
- A very classical, fruitful, and much-studied invariant is the L-function (function on the complex plane, associated to one out of several categories of mathematical objects).
- Some of the deepest problems in modern number theory are concerned with proving exact formulae for the values of L-functions at integer points in terms of purely arithmetic objects.

## Statehood Day

### In news

Prime Minister praised the warm-hearted people of north eastern states of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura and acknowledged their contributions to national development as he congratulated them on their Statehood Day

### Highlights

- On this day in 1972, all the three states became full-fledged states under the North Eastern Region (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.
- January 21, 2021 marks the 49th statehood day of northeastern states Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya.
- Tripura and Manipur, the former princely states were blended into the Indian Union in October 1949 and became full states on January 21, 1972.
- Meghalaya, which was part of Assam, also received its own full statehood under the North Eastern Region (Re-Organisation) Act, 1971.
- Before the northeastern region turned into seven sisters with statehood of Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, the regional composition of the North East comprised Assam plains from the old Assam Province, the hill districts, and the North Eastern Frontier Tracts (NEFT) of the North-Eastern borderland.
- Soon after independence in 1947, the princely states of Manipur and Tripura got their own statehood based on the tribal and ethnic population in the region.

## Background

- Manipur and Tripura states were granted the status of Union Territories in 1949.
- Meanwhile, Nagaland was granted statehood on December 1, 1963. Within Assam, Meghalaya was given the status of an autonomous state through the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 1969, according to the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution.
- It was finally, in 1972 that Tripura, Meghalaya were granted full statehood by the North East Reorganisation Act of 1971.

## 7th Edition of MASCRAD 2021

### In news

Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurates the 7th Edition of MASCRAD 2021 organized by FICCI

### Aim

- The aim of MASCRAD 2021 is to foster a healthy discussion on newer and practical strategies to mitigate the challenges of counterfeiting and smuggling especially in a post COVID era.
- Chief among them should be a focus on generating awareness.

### The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

- Government of India has taken various measures to check menace of spurious drugs.
- The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 was amended under Drugs & Cosmetics Amendment Act 2008.
- Under this Act, if any drug is deemed to be adulterated or spurious, then the offender or liable person may face imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than ten years but which may extend to imprisonment for life.
- Special Courts for trial of offences under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act for speedy disposal have been established.

### MASCRAD

- MASCRAD is an event to deliberate and discuss actionable, innovative policy solutions that can reverse the rising tide of counterfeit, smuggled and spurious products.
- Smuggling and counterfeit trade hold back progress, impact health of the economy and create safety hazards for consumers.
- FICCI MASCRAD is also held for recognizing the work of the law enforcement agencies and felicitating the best performing officers each year for their outstanding achievement in the prevention of counterfeiting and smuggling, and enforcement of anti-smuggling and anti-counterfeiting laws.