

## Current Affairs: National News

### India, Maldives sign five pacts to boost infrastructure projects

- **India** and its Southern neighbour **Maldives signed five agreements** that **would boost infrastructure in the island nation.**
- The pacts that were signed during **Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's visit.**
- India has offered a standalone Line of Credit of \$40 million for sports infrastructure in the Maldives.
- Jaishankar, who arrived here on the first leg of his two-nation tour that will also take him to Mauritius, handed over **100,000 additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine** to the Foreign Minister and Health Minister Kerafa Naseem.

### Tourism Minister to inaugurate Incredible India Mega Homestay Development

- **Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel** will inaugurate the three day Incredible **India Mega Homestay Development and Training Workshop in Darjeeling.**
- The concept of Homestay is getting popular in Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of Northern part of West Bengal.
- The involvement of the local community is more than ever in this **Homestay Tourism** at one of the most favoured hill stations for domestic and inbound tourists.
- The Tourism Ministry said, a total of **450 homestay** owners will be trained in the workshop where **IIAS School of Management** will train them free of cost in different spheres of Hospitality.
- The aim of this robust hospitality training workshop is to upgrade the hospitality skills of local community stakeholders by capacity building.

### National Toy Fair to be organized from Feb 27

- The **first-ever National Toy Fair** will be organized from **27th February to 2nd March** through a virtual medium.
- **IIT Gandhinagar** based Centre for Creative Learning (CCL) will showcase its unique 75 toy creations in the fair.
- IIT Gandhinagar is the only IIT in the country which is running such a centre for creative learning.

### Several projects to be launched by PM Modi in Assam, West Bengal

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit **Assam and West Bengal.**
- In Assam, Mr Modi will dedicate important projects of the oil and gas sector to the nation at **Silapathar in Dhemaji district.**
- The Prime Minister will dedicate to the nation the **INDMAX** Unit at Indian Oil's Bongaigaon Refinery, Oil India Limited's Secondary Tank Farm at Madhuban, Dibrugarh and a Gas Compressor Station at Hebeda Village, Makum, Tinsukia.
- He will also inaugurate the **Dhemaji Engineering College** and lay the foundation stone for Sualkuchi Engineering College.
- These projects will usher in an era of energy security and prosperity, and open bright avenues of opportunity for local youth.
- They are in line with the **Prime Minister's vision of Purvodaya to drive Eastern India's socio-economic growth.**

## Prakash Javadekar inaugurates Atal Paryavaran Bhavan in Lakshadweep

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, **Prakash Javadekar**, inaugurated the **Atal Paryavaran Bhavan at Lakshadweep on Feb 19, 2021.**
- Prakash Javadekar is on a **four day official visit to Lakshadweep from February 19 to 22, 2021.**
- The minister attended high level meetings with the Secretaries of various departments in UT's administration.
- The Minister is to attend programmes at **Suheli, Kadmat and Bangaram islands** and evaluate major innovative initiatives of the Forest and Environment Department of the Union Territory.
- **Suheli Par is an oval-shaped and 17 km long coral atoll in Lakshadweep**, that is surrounded by a zone of rich marine fauna.

## Assam CM Sonowal lays foundation of first skill university of eastern India

- **Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** laid the **foundation of the first skill university of eastern India in Darrang district**, aimed at imparting training to over **10,000 students in 12 disciplines.**
- The varsity would be built with a financial outlay of **1,000 crore.**
- It is expected to be completed by 2026, and will have understandings with countries like Germany, Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, Japan, England.

## PM Modi to address 66th annual convocation of IIT Kharagpur

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the **66th annual convocation of IIT Kharagpur via video conferencing.**
- The institute is organizing its convocation in virtual mode, keeping in view the safety measures during the post pandemic situation.
- **Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and Minister of State for Education Sanjay Dhotre** will also attend the convocation.

## Govt sanctions over 56 thousand more houses – PMAY (Urban)

- Government has sanctioned over **56 thousand more houses** under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).**
- The Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee has approved them.
- **Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri** said, out of the total validated demand of one crore 12 lakh houses by 2022, nearly one crore 11 lakh homes are now sanctioned.
- He informed that over 73 lakh houses have now been grounded.
- The Minister said, 42 lakh 70 thousand houses have been handed over to the beneficiaries.

## Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy Resigns

- **Puducherry** chief minister **V Narayanasamy**, has submitted the letter of his **resignation** and his council of ministers on February 22, 2021 to the **Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan.**
- The decision was taken as the **Congress-led Government** in the UT lost its majority in the House, which is 14.

## **DRDO conducts two successful launches of Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile**

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has conducted **two successful launches of Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM)**.
- The launches were carried out from a static vertical launcher from Integrated Test Range, **Chandipur off the coast of Odisha**.

## **Nitin Gadkari inaugurates 50 artisan-based SFURTI clusters (Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries)**

- **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Nitin Gadkari** has inaugurated 50 artisan-based **SFURTI clusters spread over 18 States**.
- In these clusters, over **42 thousand artisans** have been supported in the traditional segments of muslin, khadi, coir, handicraft, handlooms, wood craft, leather, pottery, carpet weaving, bamboo, agro processing, tea and others.
- **These clusters have been inaugurated in** Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

## **India becomes 1st country in world – identify need for action for Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease**

- **Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan** said that India has become the first country in the world to identify the need for action for **Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease**.
- He said this while launching the operational guidelines for integration of Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease with the National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke.

## **88 Railway projects dedicated to nation**

- **Railways Minister Piyush Goyal** inaugurated and dedicated a host of infrastructure projects and projects related to passenger amenities at various railway stations in **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka** through video conferencing.
- **88 Railway projects** were dedicated to the nation worth over one thousand crore rupees making Indian Railways future ready.
- Inaugurating the rail projects in Kerala, Mr Goyal said that it is important to improve connectivity in the state which is a keeper of Indian Heritage and for the railway passengers using the various amenities in the state.

## **President Ram Nath Kovind to inaugurate Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Cricket Stadium**

- **President Ram Nath Kovind** will formally inaugurate the **world's largest Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Cricket Stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad Gujarat**.
- The President Kovind is expected to watch the third cricket test match between India and England for some time with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah soon after the inauguration ceremony.
- Sardar Patel Cricket Stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad is all set to make history by hosting the day-night pink ball test match between India and England.

## Chandigarh became the first state or Union Territory in India to launch Carbon Watch

- **Chandigarh** became the **first state or Union Territory** in India to **launch Carbon Watch**, a mobile **application to assess the carbon footprint of an individual**.
- Although the app can be accessed by everyone, it has specific options for the residents of Chandigarh to compile a detailed study.
- The application can be **downloaded through a QR code in Android supported smart cell phones**.
- Carbon footprint is the amount of greenhouse gases-especially carbon dioxide-released into the atmosphere by a particular human activity

## UP govt presents biggest ever budget of around Rs 5,50,270 crores to make self-reliant state

- **Uttar Pradesh** Government presented the biggest ever budget to the tune of around **Rs 5,50,270 crores** to make **Atma Nirbhar or self-reliant Uttar Pradesh**.
- The budget presented by **Finance Minister Suresh Khanna** in the State Assembly was also the first paperless budget of any state in the country.
- The budget focuses on **farmers' welfare, women empowerment and health sector along with the development projects**.
- Atmanirbhar Krishak Samanvit Vikas Yojna has been launched for the welfare of the farmers of the state.

## e-Kuber payments system launched in J&K

- **Jammu and Kashmir** formally rolled out **e-Kuber payments system of Reserve Bank of India**.
- J&K is the **first Union Territory** to implement version **9 of e-Kuber payments system**
- e-Kuber would be implemented in the Civil Secretariat treasury on pilot basis and rollout of this system for other treasuries shall follow shortly.
- The system is capable of making **50,000 transactions** at a time, while all government-related financial transactions would be dealt directly with RBI, without any intermediary bank.

## Punjab Cabinet approves mission 'Lal Lakir' in all villages

- The **Punjab Cabinet approved implementation of mission 'Lal Lakir'**
- It aimed at **facilitating villagers to monetise property rights** and availing benefits provided by government departments, institutions and banks in all villages across the state.
- 'Lal Lakir' refers to land that is part of the village 'abaadi' (habitation) and is used for non-agriculture purposes only.
- Under the mission, the right of record of properties within 'Lal Lakir' in the villages of the state will be prepared with the cooperation of the government of India under the **SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme**.
- This will enable mapping the land, households, habitation and all other areas falling within 'Lal Lakir'.

## Union Minister Kiren Rijiju inaugurates state of the art training facilities – Bengaluru

- **Union Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs Kiren Rijiju** inaugurated gym complex and modern change room and laid the foundation stone for **330-bedded hostel**,

upgradation of kitchen and dining hall and synthetic athletics track in the Bengaluru campus of Sports Authority of India.

- He said that sportsmen who bring laurels to the country are our heroes and they deserve the best state of the art training facilities, hostels and nutritious food.

### **Kerala govt sanctions Rs.9 crore to build 'smart' anganwadis**

- The **Kerala government** has sanctioned **9 crore** to convert the **conventional anganwadis into "smart" structures with better amenities.**
- The smart anganwadis are being designed and constructed as part of the **Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).**
- It is expected to have various amenities, ranging from study hall, kitchen, dining area, store room, creative zone, garden to swimming pool and outdoor play area as per the availability of land.

### **Karnataka to host second Khelo India University Games this year**

- Union Sports Minister **Kiren Rijju** has announced that the second **Khelo India University Games will be hosted by Karnataka.**
- Bengaluru along with **Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, Mr Rijju** said that the largest University games in the country scheduled later this year will be held in **Bengaluru** in partnership with Association of Indian Universities.
- **Over 4,000 sportsmen under the age of 25** will compete with an opportunity to be selected for the national teams.
- The first edition of University games was held in Bhubaneswar.

### **First paperless budget to be presented in Uttar Pradesh Assembly**

- The **first paperless budget will be presented in Uttar Pradesh Assembly.**
- UP will be the first state in the country to table a paperless budget.
- **The State Finance Minister Suresh Khanna** will present the first paperless budget in the history of the State.
- All members of the State Legislature have been provided **iPads** to view the budget highlights which will also be available on two big screens put up in the House.
- The **2021-2022 budgets** will also be available on an App which can be downloaded from Google Play Store with the name '**Uttar Pradesh Sarkar Ka Budget**'.

### **Uttar Pradesh govt to develop Jewar Airport as Asia's biggest airport**

- Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government plans to develop **Jewar Airport as Asia's biggest airport with six runways.**
- The state government has to set aside **2,000 crore** for Jewar Airport in its budget for 2021-22 presenting in the Assembly.
- The state government has also increased the number of runways of the Jewar Airport to six, from two proposed earlier.
- The under construction airport in Ayodhya will be named as **Maryada Purushottam Sriram Airport.**
- A provision of **101 crore rupees** has been made for it in the budget.
- Ayodhya airport will also be subsequently made an international airport.

### **Mehbooba Mufti re-elected as President of PDP**

- **Former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Mehbooba Mufti** has been re-elected as **President of Peoples' Democratic Party.**

## Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0 launched to expand immunization coverage across country

- **Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan** launched **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0, (IMI 3.0)** to expand immunization coverage across the country.
- The focus of the Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0 **will be the children and pregnant women who have missed their vaccine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- They will be identified and vaccinated during the two rounds.
- Beneficiaries from migration areas and hard to reach areas will be targeted as they may have missed their vaccine doses during COVID19.

## Hyderabad gets recognition as 2020 Tree City of the World

- The **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization** and the **Arbor Day Foundation** have recognized **Hyderabad as a 2020 Tree City of World, for its commitment to growing and maintaining urban forests.**
- Hyderabad earned recognition in the Foundation's second year of the programme along with 51 other cities globally **(120 cities from 63 countries assessed)** and the only city in India to get this recognition so far.
- List of **Five Factors to be Eligible for 'Tree City'**
- To be eligible for Tree City, the city must affirm its five requirements, include
  1. Defining responsibility (the declaration written by civic representatives to assign the responsibility for trees)
  2. Setting down the rules (the law or official policy that regulates forest and tree management)
  3. Knowing what you have (an updated inventory or assessment of the local tree resources)
  4. Allocate funds (a dedicated annual tree management plan routine budget)
  5. Celebrate achievements (an annual celebration of trees to raise awareness).

## Centre kicks off 'Go Electric' campaign to promote e-mobility

- The Union government launched the **'Go Electric' campaign to spread awareness** about the **benefits of e-mobility and electric vehicle (EV)** charging infrastructure in India.
- The campaign was launched in the presence of Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Micro, Small, Medium Enterprise and R K Singh, MoS (IC) Power and New & Renewable Energy, MoS Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, under the aegis of the Ministry of Power, is mandated to undertake an awareness drive for promoting public charging, e-mobility and its ecosystem

## Kerala CM launches KFON to provide free internet connectivity to Poor families

- **Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan** inaugurated the **Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON)** project intended to **provide free internet connections to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families** in the state.
- The **first phase of the project**, which **will also help connect users in schools, hospitals, offices and houses, was launched in Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts.**
- In **Kerala, which became the first state** that declared access to internet as a basic human right, private sector Vodafone-Idea is a leading service provider with 51.9%

market share, Reliance Jio has 22.6% market share, while public sector BSNL's share is 12.6%.

### **Snakepedia' mobile app launched in Kerala to help people, doctors treat snake bites**

- A team of scientists, nature lovers and doctors have come up with a **mobile application 'Snakepedia' on snakes in Kerala to help the public as well as doctors to treat snake bites.**
- Snakepedia is a **comprehensive android mobile application** that documents information on snakes with the help of pictures, infographics and podcasts and analyses its first aid, treatment, myths and superstitions.
- The **main aim** of the app is **to help the public identify snakes, avail proper treatment on time for snakebites**

### **J&K: 7-day long exhibition of NSSH scheme concluded**

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, a seven day long exhibition of **National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub (NSSH) scheme concluded at ITI, Ground in Rajouri.**
- The valedictory function of the exhibition was attended by **Vice Chairperson, Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB), Dr. Hina Shafi, DDC, Rajouri, Rajesh Shavan besides officers of KVIB.**

### **PM Modi to launch Mahabahu-Brahmaputra initiative in Assam**

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** would launch the **Mahabahu-Brahmaputra initiative** and lay the **foundation stones of one bridge** and perform a ground-breaking ceremony (bhumi puja) of another in **Assam** via video conferencing.
- **Aim :** To improve connectivity in the eastern states, will be marked by the inauguration of the Ro-Pax vessel operations between Neamati-Majuli Island, North Guwahati-South Guwahati and Dhubri-Hatsingimari.
- Foundation stone of Inland Water Transport Terminal at Jogighopa and various tourist jetties on Brahmaputra and launch of digital solutions for Ease-of-Doing-Business will also be a part of the initiative.
- The PM will lay the foundation stone for a four lane bridge over the **Brahmaputra between Dhubri (on North Bank) and Phulbari (on South Bank).**

### **Indian Government Launches Sandes, a Whatsapp Like Instant Messaging App For Government Employes**

- The **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** of India has launched an **instant messaging app** just like **WhatsApp for government employees called Sandes.**
- The government is currently asking employees to use the GIMS/Sandes app. There is still no word if this app will ever be available for all users in the future.
- Just like WhatsApp, one can share images, videos, voice messages, create groups on the app. Users can also set up their profile pictures and status.
- Notably, this app is an upgrade to NIC's existing **Government Instant Messaging System (GIMS) app.**

### **Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar launches applications for five pan-India surveys**

- The importance of accurate data for policy making, **Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar** launched **software applications for five pan-India surveys,** including on migrant and domestic workers.

- The minister also released instruction manuals with questionnaires for the five pan-India surveys being conducted by the Labour Bureau.
- These five surveys being undertaken by the **Labour Bureau** are – **All-India Survey on Migrant workers, All-India Survey on Domestic Workers, All-India Survey on Employment Generated by Professionals, All-India Survey on Employment Generated in Transport Sector, and All-India Quarterly Establishment based Employment Survey.**

### **PM Modi inaugurates oil and gas sector projects in Tamil Nadu**

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone for key **oil and gas sector projects in Tamil Nadu** via video conferencing.
- During his address, the Prime Minister said, **Indian Oil's 143-km-long pipeline from Ramanathapuram to Thoothukudi** will monetise the gas from ONGC gas fields.
- This is a part of a larger national gas pipeline project being developed at a cost of **4,500 crore.**
- It will benefit Ennore, Thiruvallur, Bengaluru, Puducherry, Nagapattinam, Madurai and Thoothukudi."

### **India joins Russia-Iran's two-day naval exercise**

- **India has joined Iran and Russia** in a **two-day navy exercise** dubbed "**Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021**" in the northern part of the Indian Ocean.

#### **About the drill :**

- The drill will cover an area of 17,000 square kilometres (6,500 square miles).
- It will include shooting at sea and air targets and liberating hijacked ships, as well as search and rescue and anti-piracy operations, Al Jazeera reported.

### **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Birth Anniversary – Prime Minister pays rich tribute**

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** paid rich tributes to **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** on the occasion of his Birth Anniversary.
- Remembering Chhatrapati Shivaji as an **immortal son of Mother India**, Mr. Modi said that the saga of indomitable courage, valour and intelligence of the great Maratha ruler will keep inspiring countrymen for ages.
- **Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar** remembered Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as a great warrior and strategist of India.

### **Foreign Ministers of Quad countries demand promoting freedom of navigation in Indo-Pacific region**

- Foreign Ministers of Quad countries – **India, Australia, Japan and US** – discussed the necessity to promote freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar** represented India at the **Third Quad Ministerial Meeting.**
- It was noted that the Indo-Pacific concept had gathered growing international support, including in Europe.

## **PM calls for special visa for Doctors and Nurses for South Asia to tackle any medical emergency**

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has said that India is working towards a **healthy and COVID-19 free neighbourhood**.
- Addressing a Workshop on COVID-19 Management-Experience, Good Practices and Way Forward with nearly ten neighboring countries virtually, Mr Modi said all countries have learned from each other from best practices.
- Mr Modi suggested that there should be special visas for medical professionals and arrangement for **special Air ambulance**.
- Prime minister said, **India's Ayushman Bharat** can be a case study for all the regional countries for healthcare.

## **'Pariksha Pe Charcha' programme with Prime Minister to be held online**

- **Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** has announced that the **fourth edition of Prime Minister's Interaction Programme** with school students, teachers and parents – Pariksha Pe Charcha will be held next month.
- Mr Nishank also said that the registration process for the forthcoming '**Pariksha Pe Charcha**' programme has begun which will be open till 14th of March.
- He informed me that this time the programme will be held virtually.
- He said the participants of this programme will be selected through an online competition which will be organised on **MyGov platform**.
- Mr Nishank also informed that the portal for online creative writing competition will remain open till 14th of March.

## **2,500 classrooms at higher education level to be converted into smart classrooms – Karnataka Deputy CM**

- **Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Dr. C. N. Ashwath Narayana**, who holds the Higher Education portfolio, has informed that **2,500 classrooms** at the higher education level will be converted into smart classrooms in the **next two months**.
- At the **Government Arts College in Bengaluru**, he said that Integrated Learning Management System with high speed internet and the state of the art tabs will be available in the smart classrooms.
- The Learning Management System will make the learning process more accessible and enable teachers to track the learning level of students.

## **Two new grants announced by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio**

- **Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio** announced **two new grants, namely, the Chief Minister's Grant for Journalism and the Chief Minister's Research Grant**.
- Delivering the Budget Speech at the ongoing Budget Session, Mr Rio said, the journalism grant will support the strengthening of democracy and thereby positively impact good governance as it is an endeavor to empower a vibrant fourth estate.
- He said, the research grant will support advancement of science and extend funding to research and research scholars.

## **Janaushadhi Kendra inaugurated by Union Minister D. V. Sadananda Gowda in Bengaluru**

- All the government hospitals in the country will have **Janaushadhi Kendras** that sell affordable generic medicines to the common man.

- **Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers D. V. Sadananda Gowda** informed this during the inauguration of a **Janaushadhi Kendra in Bengaluru**.
- He appealed to all the doctors in government hospitals to prescribe generic medicines.
- There are **7,500** Janaushadhi Kendras in the country and Karnataka alone has 850 such shops.
- The Janaushadhi shops provide BP tablets at a **price of 250 to 300 rupees as against 2,500 to 3,000 rupees** charged for the branded medicines.

### Amazon announces first device manufacturing line in India

- E-commerce giant **Amazon** has announced its plans to begin **manufacturing devices in India**.
- This is the **first Amazon manufacturing line in India** and reiterates the firm's commitment to the government's **"Make in India" for an Atma Nirbhar Bharat**.
- Amazon will commence manufacturing with contract manufacturer Cloud Network Technology, a subsidiary of Foxconn, in Chennai, and start production later this year.
- The programme will churn out hundreds of thousands of Fire TV Stick devices every year. Amazon will evaluate scaling capacity to additional marketplaces and cities, depending on the domestic demand.
- In 2020 Amazon announced "Local Shops on Amazon", a programme that retailers and local shops be self-dependent, and benefit from selling online.

### IIT Madras-incubated Pi Beam launches PiMo e-bike

- **IIT Madras-incubated startup Pi Beam** has launched an **electric two-wheeler, PiMo, for Rs 30,000**.
- The utility e-bike, which is targeted at personal and commercial applications, **has a range of 50 km**.
- The e-bike does not require a license or registration and has localised most of the components including the lithium-ion batteries and controllers.
- The company aims to sell **10,000 units** by the end of **next financial year (2021-22)**.

### PM Modi to inaugurate key projects of Kerala virtually

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of key projects of power and urban sector in **Kerala through video conferencing**.
- He will inaugurate the **320 KV Pugalur – Thrissur Power Transmission Project**.
- It is a Voltage Source Inverter based High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Project and has India's first HVDC link featuring state-of-the-art VSC technology.
- Built at a cost of **Rs 5070 crore**, it will facilitate transfer of 2000 MW power from the western region and help meet the growth in load for the people of Kerala.
- The Prime Minister will also dedicate to the nation the 50 MW Kasaragod Solar Power Project.
- It has been developed under the National Solar Energy Mission.

### Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot to Virtually Release 3rd Edition of Indian Sign Language dictionary

- Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment **Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot** will virtually release the **3rd edition of the Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary** with 10,000 terms (including 6,000 earlier terms) on **17th February 2021** in a virtual programme.
- The programme will be webcast live at the following link: **<https://webcast.gov.in/msje/>**

- The Dictionary has been brought out by the **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)**, an autonomous Institute under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

### Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launches Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan

- **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched a **Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan** under **Jal Jeevan Mission- Urban**.
- It will be conducted in cities to ascertain equitable distribution of water, reuse of wastewater and mapping of water bodies with respect to quantity and quality of water through a challenge process.
- As a first step, the Ministry has decided to launch the Survekshan in **10 cities- Agra, Badlapur, Bhubaneswar, Churu, Kochi, Madurai, Patiala, Rohtak, Surat and Tumkur**

### Odisha Govt announced Rs 200 crore Development Package for Maa Samaleswari Temple

#### 'Free Gift Milk to Girl Students of Sikkim' initiative at Gangtok

- **Sikkim Chief Minister P. S. Tamang** launched the **'Free Gift Milk to Girl Students of Sikkim'** initiative at Gangtok.
- The initiative will benefit around **1,500 students** who would be provided 200 mls of milk every day.

#### Civil Aviation Ministry allows – drones to Kochi Metro Rail Ltd

- **Civil Aviation Ministry and Directorate General of Civil Aviation** have granted **permission** for usage of drones to Kochi Metro Rail Limited, Kerala.
- The Remotely Piloted Aircraft System is to be used for Integrated Urban Regeneration & Water Transport System Project.
- **The permission is valid till 31st December 2021** from the date of issue of the letter or until the full operationalization of **Digital Sky Platform (Phase-1)**, whichever is earlier.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS: INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### India offers USD 100 million line of credit to Mauritius

- India offered a **USD 100 million line of credit to Mauritius** to facilitate procurement of **defence assets** and the two countries signed a Comprehensive Economic **Cooperation Partnership Agreement following talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth** here.
- "SAGAR policy reaffirmed. Pleased to witness, along with PM @JugnauthKumar, the exchange of USD 100 million Defence Line of Credit.
- Will facilitate procurement of defence assets, guided by the needs of Mauritius,".

### Israel launches "green pass" for people with vaccination certificate

- **Israel** has launched a coronavirus **'green pass' system**, and that allows people who have been vaccinated to access public facilities.

- Israelis who have gotten both Pfizer vaccine shots and those who have recovered from the virus get a "Green Pass" certificate in the form of a **QR code or printout for people** without smartphones.
- Pass-holders could prove their status by presenting a vaccination certificate or downloading a health ministry app linked to their medical files.
- The pass allows entry to gyms, swimming pools, hotels, entertainment venues and sporting events. Restaurants and bars will be added to the list in March.

### U.S. Officially Rejoins Paris Climate Agreement

- The **United States** officially **rejoined the Paris Agreement on climate change** designed to limit global warming and avoid its potentially catastrophic impacts.
- Nearly 200 nations have signed on to the landmark accord and committed to limit their greenhouse gas emissions in an attempt to keep global warming **below 2 degrees Celsius** preferably below 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial temperatures.
- Earlier, in November 2020, the US had officially exited the agreement on the order of the then President Donald Trump.
- The landmark Paris climate agreement was signed in 2015, as per which countries are expected to enhance their commitments to curb greenhouse gas emissions every five years.

### Free period (sanitary) products to all students offered by all New Zealand schools

- The scheme to provide free menstrual products for the next three years comes after a six-month pilot program launched last year in **15 schools in the Waikato region where 3,200 young people** were provided with period products.
- **Every school in New Zealand will** be stocked with free period products for female students from June, **the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern**, has confirmed.
- Principals and poverty groups have been calling for the move for years, saying period poverty meant some girls ended up skipping school during their periods because they could not afford the sanitary products to manage them hygienically.

### France Passes Anti-radicalism Bill

- The **French Parliament** has approved an **Anti-radicalism Bill** in a bid to **fight the Islamic radicalism**.
- The bill would **strengthen oversight of mosques, schools and sports clubs** to safeguard France from radical Islamists and ensure respect for French values, one of President Emmanuel Macron's landmark projects.
- The vote in the lower house was the first critical hurdle for the legislation that has been long in the making after two weeks of intense debate. The bill passed 347 to 151 with 65 abstentions.
- To adapt to the changes, the bill amends the French law of 1905 guaranteeing the separation of Church and State.

### AI based translation software 'Amar Vasha' launched by Bangladesh Supreme Court

- The **Bangladesh Supreme Court** launched the **Artificial Intelligence (AI) based translation software 'Amar Vasha'** through a virtual event.
- The software will translate orders and judgements of the Supreme Court from English to Bangla.
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Law Minister Anisul Haq, Law Secretary Md. Golam Sarwar and High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh Vikram Doraiswami spoke during the virtual function.
- The Software has been developed with '**EkStep**' foundation of India.

- It is based on their '**Anuvaad**' translation software used in India to translate from English to Indian languages including Bangla.
- **Anuvaad** was deployed by the Supreme Court of India as **SUVAS (Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software)** from November 2019.

### **India and Australia – work together for peace, prosperity and security in Indo-Pacific region**

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison.**
- Modi said, both the countries reiterated their commitment to consolidate Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and discussed regional issues of common interest.
- He said, India is looking forward to **working together for peace, prosperity and security** in the Indo-Pacific region.

### **Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia resigns**

- On February 18, 2021, The Prime Minister of **Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia** has announced his **resignation**
- Gakharia said in a statement he was stepping down because of disagreements within his own team over the decision to arrest Nika Melia, chairman of the United National Movement opposition party.
- Gakharia served as the Prime Minister from **8 September 2019 to 18 February 2021.**

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS: BUSINESS NEWS**

### **All-women operated customer service centre opened in Punjab CEAT**

- Tyre maker CEAT announced the opening of all-women operated customer service centre Shoppes at **Bhatinda in Punjab** and said it plans to set up such outlets pan-India in the next few months.
- The **all-women CEAT Shoppes** include women workforce for all service-related assistance to customers.
- This also includes manual jobs like wheel changing, balancing and operating various machinery to service a vehicle, the company said in a release.

### **S&P Global Ratings India to be among the fastest-growing emerging economies in FY22**

- **S&P Global Ratings** said **India** will be one of the fastest growing emerging market economies with a **10% growth in the next fiscal**, and future sovereign rating action would hinge on lowering fiscal deficit and sustaining debt burden.
- For the next 2021-22 fiscal, the deficit has been put at 6.8% of the GDP, which will be further lowered to 4.5% by 2025-26 fiscal ending March 31, 2026.
- The continuous good performance by the agriculture sector, flattening of COVID-19 infection curve, pickup in government spending and the recently released budget are some of the factors for the positive growth prospect of the country.

### **YONO merchant app launched SBI Payments**

- India's largest lender, State Bank of India, will launch a **YONO merchant's app** to enable 20 million merchants from tier 2, 3 cities to adopt **digital payments.**

- The lender plans to deploy low-cost acceptance infrastructure across India over the next two years targeting the potential merchants across India in the Retail and Enterprise segment.
- The initiative will enable near field communication (NFC) enabled smart phones of merchants to turn into Point-of-sale devices after downloading the app.

### India signs 50 million dollar Defence line of Credit agreement with Maldives

- Reaffirming its commitment for overall development and security of its maritime neighbour, India has signed a **50 million dollar Line of Credit agreement** in the defence sector with the **Maldives**.
- **External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar**, who was in the Maldives, said that the agreement will facilitate capability building in the maritime domain.
- The credit line agreement for defence projects was signed between the **Finance Ministry of Maldives and the Export-Import Bank of India** to boost the maritime capabilities of the strategically vital Indian Ocean island nation.
- Dr Jaishankar also co-signed the **UTF Harbour Project agreement** with Maldives Defence Minister Mariya Didi.

### Vodafone-Idea launches premium VOD service on Vi Movies & TV app

- Vodafone Idea announced the launch of **Premium Video On Demand (PVOD)** service on **Vi Movies and TV App**, in partnership with Hungama, as the Telco looks to strengthen its **OTT play**.
- The PVOD market in India is **“premature but promising”** as the Indian audience continues to be price-conscious and choosy, Vodafone Idea (VIL) said in a statement adding such models are changing in the new post pandemic era as consumers explore alternate options of entertainment from comfort of their homes.

### Indian Bank signs MoU with IISc initiative to fund start-ups, MSMEs

- **Indian Bank** has entered into an **MOU with Society for Innovation and Development (SID)**, an initiative of Indian Institute of Science, **for extending exclusive credit facility to Start-ups and MSMEs**.
- This initiative is a part of the Banks scheme Ind SpringBoard for financing Start-ups and will empower Start-ups and MSMEs to realise their research efforts powered by financial support from the Bank and backed by incubation facilities offered by SID,
- The Bank will extend loans of up to **Rs 50 crore** to these start-ups for their working capital requirements or for purchase of machinery, equipment etc,
- Under the MOU, SID will identify the start-ups and MSMEs based on their credentials and past experience and will refer the list of such members who require financial assistance to the Bank

### Bank of Maharashtra partners with Vayana Network to offer help MSMEs

- **Bank of Maharashtra** has entered into a strategic partnership with **Vayana Network to offer financial support to the MSME sector**.
- Through this association, BoM will provide short term credit to meet funding requirements of dealers of corporates via **“Mahabank Channel Financing Scheme”** launched by the bank, through Vayana Network’s expertise in this segment.
- Under the partnership, Vayana Network will provide its Supply Chain Financing solutions (SCF) to the bank supported by Vayana’s technology and service expertise.
- The SCF solutions will include vendor and dealer financing programs across the bank’s network of **1,870 branches** across the country.

## ICICI Lombard partners with Flipkart to offer 'Hospicash' Insurance

- **E-commerce company Flipkart** has partnered with **ICICI Lombard** to offer '**Group SafeGuard**' insurance, a group insurance policy to its consumers.
- Compared to the standard **indemnity health insurance policies**, **Group SafeGuard is a benefit offering** that allows consumers to avail a payout for each day of hospitalisation,
- The fixed daily amount enables consumers to pay for incidental medical or emergency expenses
- The insurance is **affordably priced, paperless, and flexible; covering both accidental hospitalisations or planned surgeries/treatment"**
- With daily cash benefits **starting from Rs 500**, '**Hospicash**' benefit under **Group SafeGuard insurance** will provide cover to Flipkart consumers,

## CURRENT AFFAIRS: APPOINTMENT NEWS

### Gautam Thakar made global CEO of OLX Autos

- **OLX Group** appoints **Gautam Thakar** as **global CEO of OLX Autos**.
- **Thakar** will lead a worldwide organisation with a workforce of more than 4,000 employees across Asia, Africa, Latam, and the United States.
- **OLX Group** announced the appointment of **Gautam Thakar** as **global CEO of OLX Autos** effective March 15, 2021.

### K P Krishnan appointed as Shriram Capital Chairman of the board

- **Shriram Capital**, the holding company for the financial services and insurance entities of the Shriram Group, announced the appointment of **retired IAS officer K P Krishnan** as **the chairman on its board**.

### Vedanta chief financial officer GR Arun Kumar resigned

- Vedanta said **G R Arun Kumar** has resigned as **chief financial officer (CFO)** of the company.
- The company will announce the effective date of relieving Kumar and details of the successor in due course, Vedanta Ltd said in a filing to BSE.
- **"The board has taken note of the resignation of GR Arun Kumar from the post of Whole-Time Director & Chief Financial Officer of the company to pursue a career outside of the Group,"** Vedanta said.

### Sachin Tendulkar becomes brand ambassador of Unacademy

- **Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar** has picked up stake in edtech major Unacademy and signed up a strategic partnership with the company.
- **The iconic cricketer has also been roped in as its brand ambassador.**
- As a part of the agreement, Tendulkar will conduct a series of interactive classes which will be available to Unacademy learners.
- **"Sachin's life and journey is a beacon to the values of resilience and determination in the face of insurmountable odds.**

### Yanira Ramirez appointed as H&M Country Sales Manager for India

- **Fashion retail major H&M** announced the appointment of **Yanira Ramirez** as the Country Sales Manager for India.

- The appointment comes at a time when the brand has been focusing on rapid expansion and now has **50 stores across 25 cities**.

### **2 new judges in Delhi HC, 4 additional judges in Kerala HC appointed by President**

- **President Ram Nath Kovind** has appointed **Jasmeet Singh and Amit Bansal** as Judges of the **Delhi High Court**.
- Mr Kovind has also appointed four Additional Judges in the **Kerala High Court**. **Four Additional Judges of the Karnataka High Court have been elevated as Judges of this Court**.
- The Law Ministry has issued notifications in this regard.

### **Page Industries appointed V S Ganesh as Executive Director & CEO**

- The board of **Page Industries** on 22 February 2021, approved the **appointment of VS Ganesh** as the **Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer** of the company for a period of five years effective from 1 June 2021.
- **Vedji Ticku**, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, has **resigned** from Page Industries.

### **Japan Olympics minister Seiko Hashimoto appointed head of Games**

- **Japan's Seiko Hashimoto** has been **appointed the next Tokyo 2020 president**.

### **About Seiko Hashimoto :**

- The **56-year-old** has served as **Japan's Olympics minister**, doubling as minister for women's empowerment, since 2019
- **Former chief Yoshiro Mori resigned** following a **backlash**, after he was quoted as saying women talk too much.
- There were calls for a woman to replace Yoshiro Mori after he resigned over his sexist comments.
- The Summer Olympics will begin on 23 July, after already being postponed by a year due to the pandemic.
- The Japanese Olympic Committee board currently has 24 members, five of whom are women.

### **Amrit Singh appointed as Max Life Insurance Chief Financial Officer**

- **Max Life Insurance Company Ltd (Max Life)** has announced the appointment of Amrit Singh as **Chief Financial Officer & Executive Vice President, Strategy**.
- Amrit will be responsible for leading the Company's finance function and business strategy with the objective of strengthening business performance, growth margins while working with the Company's leadership team to drive its strategic initiatives.

## **Current Affairs: Agreements**

### **CSIR and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation sign MoU in area of health research**

- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** have signed a **memorandum of understanding to support the development, conduct and promotion of health research in the country**.
- Gates Foundation and CSIR will **work together to identify opportunities to initiate scientific and technological collaborations**.

- The MoU was signed by Hari Menon, Director, India Country Office on behalf of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and G N Dayananda, Head, Technology Management Directorate – Industry Interface, CSIR.
- These will focus on developing and testing new preventions, therapies and interventions that can help to solve major health concerns that affect India and other developing countries.

### Indian Oil signs pact with Greenstat Norway for hydrogen fuel

- A **national hydrogen mission to accelerate plans to generate the carbon-free fuel** from renewables, state-owned **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) signed** a pact with **Greenstat Norway for setting up a Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen.**
- In the Union Budget for 2021-22, the government pledged to focus on generating hydrogen from green power sources as well as build more diverse and efficient energy infrastructure.

### India, World Bank ink project for Nagaland

- Indian government, Government of **Nagaland and the World Bank signed** a **\$68 million** project to enhance the governance of schools across Nagaland as well as to improve teaching practices and learning environments in select schools.
- The **“Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project”** will improve classroom instruction; create opportunities for the professional development of teachers; and build technology systems to provide students and teachers with more access to blended and online learning as well as allow better monitoring of policies and programs, a Finance Ministry statement said.

## Current Affairs: Summits & Conferences

### PM addresses NASSCOM Technology and Leadership Forum 2021

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** addressed the **29th edition of Nasscom Technology and Leadership Forum (NTLF)** which is being **organized from 17th – 19th Feb** through video conferencing.
- It is the flagship event of the **National Association of Software and Service Companies.**
- This is a vibrant platform that brings together key leaders from the world of technology and innovation.
- The event is hosting almost **1600 participants from more than 30 countries and more than 30 products will be showcased during the three-days of talks.**
- NTLF 2021 with the overarching theme **‘Shaping the future towards a better normal’**
- **Aim** : To achieve three key objectives – mark as a celebration of technology which has served as a backbone to boost businesses during the crisis, draw a roadmap for the way ahead towards building a better future and bringing out the importance of trust and responsible tech in this hyper virtual world.

### Dr. Harsh Vardhan addresses ‘Population versus Planet’ Conference

- **Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare today participated and expressed his views in **WION and Zee Media’s ‘Population versus Planet’ Conference**
- It is a part of its year-long campaign called **‘Mission Sustainability: Population Vs Planet’.**

- The **crude birth rate** which was recorded at **40.8 per 1000 in 1951** has declined to **20.0 in 2018**;
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has declined from **0 in 1951 to 2.2 in 2015-16**;
- The death rate in India has declined from 7 in 2012 to 6.2 in 2018.

### CURRENT AFFAIRS: AWARDS AND HONOURS

#### PRSI National Awards 2020 – SAIL bags six awards

- The **Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)** has bagged six awards for its efforts in the field of communication at the **PRSI National Awards-2020** conferred upon by the Public Relations Society of India.
- The awards were presented by **Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** and **Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya** during a virtual ceremony on February 21.
- "SAIL has been awarded in House Journal (English), **Best Communication Campaign (External Publics)**, Communications Campaign of the Year – COVID-19, Special/Prestige Publication, E-newsletter, and Corporate Website categories," according to an official statement.

#### 10th National Awards for Technology Innovation in Petrochemicals and Downstream Plastics Processing Industry – presented by DV Sadananda Gowda

- **Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister DV Sadananda Gowda** will present the 10th National Awards for Technology Innovation in Petrochemicals and Downstream Plastics Processing Industry in New Delhi.
- The award is aimed at felicitating and recognizing the innovative efforts of renowned scientists, researchers and industrialists in the broad areas of **Polymer Science and Technologies**.

#### Environmental Enforcement Awards recognize 8 winners on the frontline of protecting our planet

- Exceptional efforts on the frontlines to stop environmental crime, including the illegal trade in wildlife and in plastic waste, have been recognized by **the United Nations, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization with the presentation of the 5th Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards**.
- The Awards are given annually for achievement in **combating transboundary environmental crime**.

#### About the Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards 2020

- The 2020 Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards are presented by the UN Environment Programme in partnership with the UN Development Programme, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the World Customs Organization.
- The awards encourage government officials and institutions or teams in the region to combat environmental crime and reward excellence in enforcement.

## 'Amar Ekushey' – International Mother Language Award in Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh** observed the **Language martyr's day** with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President **M Abdul Hamid** paying tributes to the martyrs of the **historic language movement by placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka.**
- **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** gave away the **first International Mother Language Day award** to three individuals and one organisation.
- **Education Minister Dipu Moni** handed over the award to renowned Nazrul scholar and national **Professor Rafiqul Islam** in a function in Dhaka on behalf of the Prime Minister.
- **Mathura Bikash** Tripura got the award for his contribution in preserving and promoting mother languages of small ethnic groups in Bangladesh.
- Uzbek Researcher **Islaimov Gulom Mirzaevich** and a Bolivian organisation named Activismo Lenguas also got the biennial prize.

## 5 Indian Origin Persons, Indian Activist Feature | in TIME Magazine's List of 100 Emerging Leaders

- **Bhim Army Chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad** and **five Indian-origin personalities** have been featured in **Time magazine's annual list of 100 'emerging leaders** who are shaping the future.'
- Five Indian-origin personalities, including **Twitter's top lawyer Vijaya Gadde** and **UK's finance minister Rishi Sunak, and an Indian activist feature in TIME magazine's** annual list of 100 "emerging leaders who are shaping the future".
- The 2021 TIME100 Next, released on Wednesday, is an expansion of TIME's flagship TIME100 franchise of the most influential people in the world.
- Other Indian-origin personalities on the list are Instacart founder and CEO Apoorva Mehta, doctor and Executive Director of nonprofit Get Us PPE Shikha Gupta and founder of nonprofit Upsolve Rohan Pavuluri.

## WCCB bags Asia Environmental Enforcement Award-2020

- **The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** has received the **Asia Environmental Enforcement Award-2020** awarded by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).**
- Union Environment Minister **Prakash Javadekar** said that WCCB getting the award twice in three years is a testimony of India's commitment towards ending wildlife crime.
- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has been awarded this year under the Innovation category.
- Earlier, the Bureau had received the award in 2018 under the same category.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS: MOU's

### Liberty Steel forms tie-up with hydrogen-based steel plant in France

- **UK-based Liberty Steel Group**, owned by Indian-origin metals tycoon Sanjeev Gupta, has signed MoUs with **two European companies to set up France's first hydrogen-based steel making plant.**
- Liberty Steel Group is part of diversified GFG Alliance, which has a presence in India.
- Last year in February, GFG Alliance made a foray into the domestic steel industry with the acquisition of Adhunik Metaliks Ltd and its arm Zion Steel for about Rs 425 crore.

## India successfully test fires Helina, Dhruvastra anti-tank guided missiles

- **India** successfully test fired indigenously-developed anti-tank guided missile systems '**Helina**' and '**Dhruvastra**', paving their induction into the **Army and the Indian Air Force**
- The missiles were test fired at **Pokhran deserts in Rajasthan**.
- The missile systems have been designed and developed indigenously by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- Helina, which is the helicopter-launched version of the Nag missile system, is a third-generation fire and forget class anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) system mounted on the ALH.
- The Helina has also undergone successful trials in 2018. Both Nag and Helina were part of the DRDO's Republic Day display, which showcased its entire anti-tank missile family

## Indian And Indonesian Navies Conduct Exercise In Arabian Sea

- The **Indian and Indonesian navies** carried out a **military exercise in the Arabian sea to enhance operational interoperability and overall cooperation**.
- Indian naval ship INS Talwar and Indonesian Navy's multirole corvette KRI Bung Tomo were part of the exercise,

## India, Ethiopia sign agreements on visa facilitation & leather technology

- **India and Ethiopia** signed two agreements related to visa facilitation and leather technology.
- The **agreements** were signed in the presence of **Ethiopia Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen Hassen and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar**.
- Hassen is on a 4-day visit to India, from February 16.
- Jaishankar tweeted that he had useful and productive discussions with Hassen on a range of bilateral and regional issues.
- The two ministers agreed to expand India and Ethiopia bilateral agenda especially defence, economic, S&T, digital and cultural cooperation.

## India, Nepal sign MoU – reconstruction of secondary schools in Himalayan Nation

- **India and Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the reconstruction of six secondary schools in the Himalayan nation**.
- The MoU was signed between the **Indian Embassy** and Nepal's Central Level Project Implementation Unit (Education) of **Nepal Reconstruction Authority (NRA)**.
- The MoU was for the construction of six secondary schools at a total cost of Nepali Rupees 518 million, according to a statement by the Indian Embassy.
- **Of the six schools**, four including Kanti Bhairab Secondary School, Champa Devi Secondary School, Dhapasi Secondary School and Bishnu Devi Secondary School are located in Kathmandu district and remaining two Siddheshwar Secondary School and Harisiddhi Secondary School are located in Kavre district.
- Of the six schools, a groundbreaking ceremony of one was held amid a ceremony in Thali of Kathmandu.

## TCS signs MoU with invest up to Rs.1,500 cr on Kerala digital hub

- Global IT leader **TCS** will **invest** an estimated 1,200 – **Rs.1,500 crore** to expand operations in **Kerala** and has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with Technopark here for leasing 97 acres of land at its Technocity campus to set **up a digital**

hub for engineering, product development and IT services across manufacturing sectors, Kerala Chief Minister's office informed.

## Flipkart, Tamil Nadu MSME inks MoU to support small, local products

- **Flipkart, Tamil Nadu MSME inks MoU to support small, local products.**
- **Flipkart** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**) with **Tamil Nadu MSME** Trade and Investment Promotion Bureau (MTIPB) to bring **local** artisans, weavers, craftsmen and **Small** and Mid-size Business (SMBs) of the State into the e-commerce fold.

## Current Affairs: Sports News

### Chris Morris becomes most expensive player in auction history : IPL Auction 2021

- **South-African all-rounder Chris Morris** became the **costliest player** in the history of **Indian Premier League (IPL) auction** when Rajasthan Royals snapped him up for **Rs 16.25 crore in the 2021 auction in Chennai.**
- **Earlier, Yuvraj Singh was the costliest-ever buy in auction history** as he was bought for **Rs 16 crore by Delhi Daredevils in IPL 2015.** Following the former India all-rounder are Pat Cummins (Rs 15.5 crore, 2020) and Ben Stokes (14.5 crore, 2017).

### Sri Lanka pacer Dhammika Prasad quits international cricket

- **Sri Lanka fast bowler Dhammika Prasad** has announced his **retirement from international cricket.**

### Ankita wins maiden WTA title, clinches Phillip Island Trophy doubles

- **India's Ankita Raina** On February 19 won her maiden **WTA title** as she and her **Russian partner Kamilla Rakhimova** clinched the doubles event in the **Phillip Island Trophy in Melbourne.**
- The Ankita-Kamilla pair beat Russia's Anna Blinkova and Anastasia Potapova 2-6 6-4 10-7 in the final.

### Manika Batra wins national title, eyes Tokyo Olympic spot via Doha

- **Star paddler Manika Batra** clinched her **second title** by **defeating Reeth Rishya 4-2** in the **women's singles final of the Senior National Table Tennis Championship**
- Manika Batra ,in action during final of women's singles final at the 82nd Senior National Table Tennis Championship 2020 at Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex in Panchkula.

### Naomi Osaka overpowers Jennifer Brady to win second Australian Open Title

- **Japan's Naomi Osaka** Has won the **Women's single title in the Australian open 2021.**
- She defeated Jennifer Brady in straight sets to clinch the women's singles final of the 2021 Australian Open.
- This is Osaka's second Australian Open title, she had earlier conquered the Melbourne Grand Slam in 2019.
- Naomi Osaka won her fourth Grand Slam title as she defeated Jennifer Brady in straight sets to clinch the women's singles final of the 2021 Australian Open.
- Osaka, the first Japanese player to win a major, extended her winning streak to 21 matches with this victory.

- She won the **US Open in 2018 and 2020.**

## **VIVO back as title sponsor for IPL 2021**

- **Indian Premier League Governing Council chairman Brijesh Patel** revealed at the **IPL 2021 Auction that VIVO is back as the title sponsor of the league.**
- Brijesh Patel spoke ahead of the auction in Chennai on February 18 and announced that VIVO is back as the title sponsor of the T20 league after Dream 11 had been roped in as sponsor for the 2020 season.
- Last year, the IPL signed up **Dream 11 for Rs 222 crore** for one season whereas they had been getting Rs 440 crore per year from VIVO.
- In **2018, VIVO had signed a five-year deal worth Rs 2199 crore**

## **IPL 2021: Kings XI Punjab officially renamed as Punjab Kings**

- The **Mohali-based IPL franchise** formally known as **Kings XI Punjab** were **renamed as Punjab Kings**, ahead of the **2021 auctions due to be held in Chennai on February 18.**
- The new logo honors the liveliness and vibrancy of the brand and provides modern elements, while we stand out from the rest of the teams.
- The franchise, jointly owned by Mohit Burman, Ness Wadia, Preity Zinta and Karan Paul, is yet to win an IPL title since the event's inaugural edition in 2008.
- In the tournament's 13-year history, Kings were runners-up once (2014) and achieved a third-place finish on another occasion (2008). They finished sixth in the 2020 edition, held in the UAE.
- The next IPL is set to start in the second week of April.

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS : DAYS**

### **World Thinking Day : Observed On Feb 22**

- **World Thinking Day** is celebrated each year by the **Girl Guides and Girl Scouts** across the **world on the 22nd February.**
- The **aim** of Thinking Day is to bring together young people from across the world; nearly 150 countries choose to take part in the celebrations to celebrate international fun and friendship, as well as to help raise money and focus on the year's global theme.
- 2021 Theme of World Thinking Day is: **"Peacebuilding"**

### **Importance Of The Day :**

- Thinking Day offers the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting community the opportunity to think about others and focus on the wider issues impacting those within the Guiding and Scouting movement.

### **History :**

- Thinking Day originated from a desire by the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to dedicate a day to thinking about and appreciating the global spread of these movements.
- The observance of Thinking Day has been celebrated every year since 1926, and began over 90 years ago.
- The day began when the delegates from the Guide and Girl Scout organizations from across the globe attended the 4th world conference where it was decided that the day would be created and would be held on Lord Baden-Powell's birthday, the founder of the Girl Scout and Guide movements.

## World Day Of Social Justice 2021: Observed On February 20

- **World Day Of Social Justice** is observed on **February 20 every year**.
- The main objective of celebrating World Day of Social Justice is **to raise a voice against social injustice and to bring the various communities internationally** together to eliminate poverty, gender, and physical discrimination, illiteracy, religious discrimination to make a socially integrated society.
- The theme of World Day of Social Justice 2021: **“A Call for Social Justice in the Digital Economy”**.

### History :

- On 26 November 2007, the General Assembly declared that starting from the **sixty-third session of the General Assembly, 20 February** will be celebrated annually as the World Day of Social Justice.
- The International Labour Organization unanimously adopted the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization on 10 June 2008. This is the third major statement of principles and policies adopted by the International Labour Conference since the ILO's Constitution of 1919.

## World Pangolin Day 2021: Feb 20

- The **World Pangolin Day** is celebrated on the **“Third Saturday of February” every year**.
- In 2021, the annual World Pangolin Day is being celebrated on **20 February 2020**.
- It marks the **10th edition of the event**.
- The day aims to raise awareness about these unique mammals and speed up conservation efforts.
- Pangolin numbers are rapidly declining in Asia and Africa.
- Across the world, there are eight species ranging from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered, so today is the day to start helping in raising awareness of these under-appreciated animals.

## International Mother Language Day – Observed on Feb 21

- **International Mother Language Day** is a worldwide annual observance held on **21 February** to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism.
- The **theme** of International Mother Language Day 2021 is **“fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society.”**
- International Mother Language Day recognizes that languages and multilingualism can advance inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals' focus on leaving no one behind.
- **UNESCO** believes education, based on the first language or mother tongue, must begin from the early years as early childhood care and education is the foundation of learning.