

JANUARY 1st Week Current Affairs

National News

Uttarakhand: India's first pollinator park comes up at Haldwani

- The country's **first pollinator park** with over **40 species** of butterflies, honey bees, birds and insects has been developed over four acres at **Nainital's Haldwani**.
- Developed by the research wing of the **Uttarakhand Forest Department**, the colourful park was inaugurated by renowned butterfly expert Peter Smetacek.
- **Objective of the Park** : The objective behind developing the park is to conserve various pollinator species, create awareness among people in general about the importance of conservation of these species and to promote further research on various aspects of pollination, including threat to habitat and impact of pollution on pollinators.
- There are at present 40 species of pollinators at the park.

About Pollinators :

- A pollinator is an animal that moves pollen from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma of a flower.
- This helps to bring about fertilization of the ovules in the flower by the male gametes from the pollen grains.

About Uttarakhand :

- Governor : Baby Rani Maurya
- Chief Minister : Trivendra Singh Rawat

Union Cabinet approves export of Akash missile system

- The **Union Cabinet** chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has approved the proposal to export indigenously-developed **Akash Missile System**.
- Akash is the country's important missile with over **96 percent** Akash is a Surface to Air Missile with a range of 25 Kms.
- The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces
- The missile was inducted in **2014 in IAF and in 2015 in Indian Army**.

About IAF :

- Chief of Defence : General Bipin Rawat
- Minister of Defence : Rajnath Singh
- Defence Secretary : Ajay Kumar

Indian Railways Completes 180 Kmph Speed Trail Run

- **Indian Railways** successfully completed a speed trial for **180 km per hour** of a new design vistadome tourist coach.

SALEM INSTITUTE OF BANKING

- According to the Railway Ministry, the new vistadome tourist coach has been manufactured by the **Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai**.
- These vistadome coaches mostly operate in mountain railways and are specially designed to make train journeys scenic and memorable.
- The coaches also give a boost to tourism.
- The European-style coaches are made with see-through glass rooftops and wide windows for the indulgent sightseeing experience.
- These vistadome tourist coaches boast of large windows on the sides and have glass panels on the roof of the trains.
- These coaches are being operated on selected routes on the Indian Railways network including the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, Kangra Valley Railway, Kashmir Valley, Kalka-Shimla Railway, Matheran Hill Railway between Dadar in Mumbai as well as Madgaon in the Araku Valley.

About Indian Railway :

- Comes under Ministry of Railways
- Founded : 16 April, 1853
- Headquarters : New Delhi

Minister of state for External Affairs Launches Global Pravasi Rishta portal and mobile App

- Minister of State for External Affairs V. **Muraleedharan** launched the Global Pravasi Rishta portal and mobile App, to connect with **12 crore** strong diaspora across the world.
- The Minister said, the portal will act as a **dynamic communication platform** between our pravasis, the Ministry of External Affairs and missions abroad and will help in engaging Indian diaspora more intensively.
- This portal is created to enable the registration of Indian diaspora members i.e. **NRIs, PIOs and the OCIs** which is not just going to facilitate the **Indian government to connect with the overseas Indian community** but also facilitate NRIs, OCIs and PIOs community by connecting them to various **new and existing government schemes** benefiting them in various areas of interest.
- **Union Minister for external Affairs** : Subrahmanyam Jaishankar

PM to lay foundation stone of Light House Projects at six sites

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will lay the foundation stone of Light House Projects under the **Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India)** at six sites across six states on January 1 in video conference.
- The Prime Minister will also announce winners under **Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators (ASHA)**– India and give out annual awards for excellence in implementation of Pradhan **Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U) Mission**.
- During the event, he will release a certificate course on innovative construction technologies named '**NAVARITIH**' (**New, Affordable, Validated, Research Innovation Technologies for Indian Housing**) and a compendium of 54 innovative housing construction technologies identified through GHTC-India, the Prime Minister's Office said.
- The LHPs are being constructed at **Indore** (Madhya Pradesh), **Rajkot** (Gujarat), **Chennai** (Tamil Nadu), **Ranchi** (Jharkhand), **Agartala** (Tripura) and **Lucknow** (Uttar Pradesh).

- They comprise about **1,000 houses** at each location along with allied infrastructure facilities.

PM Modi chaired the 34th PRAGATI interaction

- Modi chaired the meeting to review the **various projects, programmes & grievances**.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the **34th PRAGATI interaction**.
- Projects of the **Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** were discussed.
- These projects, with a total cost of about one lakh crore rupees, pertained to ten states and Union Territories including, **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat and Dadra and Nagar Haveli**.
- During the interaction, the programmes, **Ayushman Bharat and Jal Jeevan Mission** were reviewed.
- Grievances related to the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs** were also taken up.
- The Prime Minister directed all the officials to ensure and expedite comprehensive resolution of grievances.
- **Minister of Railways** : Piyush Goyal
- **Minister of Road Transport and Highways** : Nitin Gadkari
- **Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs** : Hardeep Singh Puri

Prime minister remembers Netaji's 75 th anniversary

- “To mark the **75th anniversary of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose**, he had gone to Port Blair and had the **honour of hoisting the Tricolour**,”
- The Prime Minister said, **30th December 1943**, a **day etched in the memory of every Indian**, when the brave Netaji Subhas Bose hoisted the Tricolour at Port Blair.
- Born to advocate **Janakinath Bose in Odisha's Cuttack** on January 23, 1897, Netaji went on to play a key role in the freedom movement.
- He is also known for establishing the Azad Hind Fauj.

Centre has achieved remarkable achievement: Power Minister R K Singh

- The renewable energy minister was speaking at the Chief Ministers' **Plenary session of the virtual 3rd Global RE-INVEST Summit**.
- Power Minister **R K Singh** said that Centre has achieved remarkable achievement in terms of expanding access to electricity in the country.
- India will have around **60 per cent** of its installed electricity generation capacity from clean and green sources by 2030.
- Union Power Minister and Minister of New & Renewable Energy, R K Singh said that the centre is committed to promote new and renewable energy resources in the country.
- He added that the centre has asked every state government to earmark at least one city within their territory as **green city**.
- Singh asserted that the government is working with a focused approach towards clean and green energy with emphasis on areas which require special attention.

Highlighting the achievements :

- **Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani** said Gujarat has been a pioneer in the space of renewable energy (RE) and in the last 3 years, the capacity of RE has increased considerably despite challenges.
- “Gujarat has given subsidies to **55,000 people** to install solar panels and have a vision of achieving 5,000 MW solar and bringing solar energy in agriculture,” he said.
- **Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot** said Rajasthan is the second largest state in terms of investments in solar energy projects.
- “When we started **20 years ago, cost of RE was Rs 16 and now it is Rs 2 per unit.**
- This is sure to reduce further. It is our duty to work towards renewable energy and climate change,” Gehlot added.
- He further said incentives have been extended to the investors in terms of reduction in **stamp duty**, easy availability of land, free electricity for 10 years, **90 per cent subsidy in GST**
- Gehlot also said Rajasthan has 1,25,000 acres of desert land across cities which have been utilised in Jodhpur and Bikaner for large mega scale solar projects.
- **Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan** said India is an ideal country for renewable energy.
- “With Madhya Pradesh being a centrally located state, it has a lot of possibilities and can supply RE power to neighbouring states if needed,” he added. Madhya Pradesh is planning a **15,000 MW solar project**, the cost of which is **Rs 5,000 crore**, he said. Besides starting work on power transmission, the state has also started survey work for some other innovative RE projects, like floating solar etc. in the state.
- He announced that “Aatmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh’ plan is being developed and RE will play an important role”.
- **Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur** said “Himachal Pradesh is a small state, but we are making all efforts to harness our RE potential.
- Our target is to achieve **24,000 MW of RE**. So far, we produce **10,000 MW** of hydro power and plan to double these numbers in the next decade”.
- **Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath** informed the session that producers have plans to set up 12,000 MW of solar energy parks in UP. Two plants of 600 MW each will be set up in Jhansi. These will be commissioned soon, he added.
- Talking about the multi-pronged benefits of the **PM-KUSUM Yojana**, launched by the **Union government in 2019**, Mr. Singh said that the scheme has financially empowered the farmers, discoms and has also benefitted the state and union territories in terms of huge financial savings.

Bihar wins Digital India award for transferring money to beneficiaries’ accounts during COVID-19

- The Chief Minister Secretariat, the Disaster Management Department besides the National Informatics Centre (NIC) of the state have jointly been chosen as winners in the “**pandemic category**” **Digital India Awards 2020**.
- The Bihar government’s initiative to transfer financial assistance directly to the accounts of beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic has made its departments winners of the Digital India Awards, instituted by the central government, this year for innovative steps in e- governance.
- More than 21 lakh stranded workers outside Bihar were provided financial assistance through the “**Bihar Sahayata Mobile App**”.

- In addition to that President Ram Nath Kovind will give away the Digital India Awards to winners on December 30 in New Delhi.

About Bihar :

- Chief Minister : Nitish Kumar
- Governor : Phagu Chauhan
- Capital : Patna

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari Announces Multi-Modal Logistics Park In Assam's Silchar

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways **Nitin Gadkari** has announced that a multi-modal logistics park will be constructed in **Silchar in Assam**.
- The Balacherra-Harengajao section of the Silchar-Saurashtra Highway will be completed in **March 2022**.
- Mr Gadkari made this announcement at a public meeting at Zero Point on the East-West Corridor at Madhurmukh at Rangpur.
- It is pertinent to mention that the Union Minister unveiled a 13-foot tall bronze statue of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

About Assam:

- Chief Minister : Sarbananda Sonowal
- Governor : Jagdish Mukhi
- Capital : Dispur

Odisha got Union Cabinet approval for project to enhance facilities at Paradip port

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the project '**Deepening and Optimization of Inner Harbour Facilities including Development of Western Dock on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode to handle cape size vessels at Paradip Port**'.
- The estimated cost of the project is **3,004.63 Crore**. This includes development of the new Western Dock on BOT basis and capital dredging by the selected Concessionaire at a cost of **Rs.2,040 Crore** and **Rs.352.13 Crore** respectively; and Paradip Port's investment will be to the tune of **Rs.612.50 Crore** towards providing Common Supporting Project Infrastructure.
- Union Minister **Dharmendra Pradhan** has said that development of the Western dock at Paradip port in Odisha, is in line with the NDA government's commitment to building next-generation infrastructure for a 21st century self-reliant India.
- The Union Cabinet had approved a project to enhance the facilities at Paradip port.
- Mr Pradhan said, the project will enhance the **cargo handling capacity** of the port, while boosting industrial economy and generating employment opportunities.
- The Minister said that it will also usher in port-led development in Odisha and eastern India in sync with the **Prime Minister's vision of Purvodaya**.

About Odisha:

- **Capital** : Bhubaneshwar

- **Chief Minister** : Naveen Patnaik
- **Governor** : Ganeshi Lal

Centre announces Nagaland 'disturbed area' for six months

- The entire state of Nagaland has been declared a disturbed area for **six more months**.
- The Home Ministry in a notification said, the Central government is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of Nagaland is in such a disturbed and dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.
- It said, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by **Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958**, the Central government declares that whole of the State of Nagaland to be disturbed area for a period of six months. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been in force in Nagaland for several decades.
- **Union minister of Home Affairs** : Amit Shah

About Nagaland :

- **Capital**: Kohima
- **Governor**: RN Ravi
- **Chief minister**: Neiphiu Rio

J&K conducts Intra State Level programme

- Jammu and Kashmir Govt conducts Intra State Level programme begins at **Teacher's Bhawan Gandhi Nagar, Jammu**
- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, as part of **National Youth Festival 2021**, an Intra State Level event begins at Teacher's Bhawan Gandhi Nagar, Jammu amid festivity.
- The programme was organised by the Department of Youth Services and Sports, J&K in collaboration with **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, J&K**.
- The intra state festival would culminate on 4th January 2021 followed by an inter-state level programme commencing on 5th.
- The programme will be concluded on 8th of January, which will include various cultural events.
- The **theme of this mega carnival** is "Standing together for truth, we the power of youth".

About Jammu and Kashmir:

- **Capital** : Jammu (winter) , Srinagar (summer)
- **Governor**: Governor Manoj Sinha

New Government Tool Room & Training Centers set by-Karnataka govt

- **Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Dr. C N Aswatha Narayana** has said that new Government Tool Room and Training Centers will be established in different parts of the state to impart training in different skills.
- The minister said that annually **6000 youth** are offered short term courses and the aim is to increase it to 15000 next year.

- He informed that two new Tool Room and Training Centers will start functioning in Bengaluru apart from one that exists now.
- Training Centers under construction in Challakere, Koppala, Chitradurga, Hunsuru and Madakeri will be ready soon.
- **Vijayapura and Bengaluru Rural districts** are chosen for building new skill training Centers apart from **24 Centers functioning now**.
- He added that the Mechanical Electronics course has overwhelming demand and hence the seats in this discipline will be increased.

About Karnataka :

- **Capital:**Bengaluru
- **Governor:**Vajubhai Vala
- **Chief minister:** B. S. Yediyurappa

Cycle rally 'Fit India campaign': Udhampur in J&K

- In the Union Territory of **Jammu and Kashmir**, to generate awareness among the common masses about the **Fit India campaign**, Municipal Council Udhampur organized a cycle rally at Udhampur.
- **Dr Piyush Singla flagged off the cycle rally**, which passed through Slathia Chowk, Ramnagar Chowk, Court road, Gole market, Bus Stand and culminated at Town Hall Udhampur.
- Cycle rally highlighted the importance of physical and mental fitness in the development of a healthy society.
- The main objective of organizing this awareness rally is to sensitize the common masses about the Fit India campaign launched by the Government of India.

North East's first-ever Ginger Processing Plant in Meghalaya

- **North East's first-ever specialised "Ginger" Processing Plant** at district **Ri-Bhoui in Meghalaya** is being revived and is likely to become functional in the beginning of 2021.
- Disclosing this here today after reviewing the functioning of the **North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC)**, a PSU working under the aegis of the Ministry of DoNER, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr.Jitendra Singh said that the only Ginger Processing Plant of North East India was established around the year 2004 but has remained non-functional for many years.
- The NERAMAC has now undertaken the responsibility of reviving it and initiated steps to operationalize the closed Plant through PPP mode.
- The ginger products being prepared from this Plant, said Dr.Jitendra Singh, will not only be available for domestic consumption but will also have a wider demand and this will also be in keeping with **Prime Minister Modi's calls for "Vocal for Local"**.
- For the **PPP mode**, an Operation and Maintenance Operator was selected through the tendering process and the work on setting up and reviving the Plant is under progress.

About Meghalaya :

- **Capital:** Shillong
- **Governor:** Satya Pal Malik
- **Chief minister:** Conrad Sangma

Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) launched

- The **Central government** has formed a **genomic surveillance consortium** for **laboratory and epidemiological surveillance of circulating strains of the SARS-CoV-2 in India.**
- The **Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG)** has been launched. Coordinated by the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** along with MoH&FW, ICMR, and CSIR, the strategy and roadmap of the National SARS CoV2 Genome Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG) has been prepared.
- The genomic surveillance consortium, INSACOG, has been formed under the leadership of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi.
- **Aim :** To monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2 on a regular basis through a multi-laboratory network. This vital research consortium will also assist in developing potential vaccines in the future.

About INSACOG :

- The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) will monitor the genomic variations on a regular basis through the multi-laboratory network.
- Knowledge generated through this vital research consortium will also assist in developing diagnostics and potential therapeutics and vaccines in the future.
- INSACOG is a consortium of 10 labs namely

1. DBT-NIBMG Kalyani,
2. DBT-ILS Bhubaneswar,
3. ICMR-NIV Pune,
4. DBT-NCCS Pune,
5. CSIR-CCMB Hyderabad,
6. DBT-CDFD Hyderabad,
7. DBT-InSTEM/ NCBS Bengaluru,
8. NIMHANS Bengaluru,
9. CSIR-IGIB Delhi,
10. NCDC Delhi.

About Department of Biotechnology :

- **Founded :** 1986
- **Headquarters :** New Delhi
- **Secretary :** Dr. Renu Swarup
- **Comes Under Ministry of Science and Technology**

Govt extends benefit of RoDTEP scheme to all export goods to boost export

- Government has decided to **extend** the benefit of the scheme for **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) to all export goods to boost exports.**

- The scheme will refund to exporters the embedded Central, State and local taxes that were so far not being given rebate or refunded.
- The refund will be credited in the exporter's ledger account with Customs and used to pay Basic Customs duty on imported goods.
- The RoDTEP rates will be notified shortly by the Department of Commerce, based on the recommendation of a Committee chaired by former Commerce and Home Secretary Dr. G.K. Pillai

Drug regulator gives final approval for Covid-19 vaccines of SII, Bharat Biotech

- The **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)** has formally announced the final approval for **Oxford-AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech vaccines** against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) for emergency use.
- **CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation)** accepts the subject expert committee reform rations on Serum and Bharat Biotech Covid vaccines.

About Covishield :

- The subject expert committee (SEC) under CDSCO had recommended Oxford-AstraZeneca's vaccine, which is being manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) as **Covishield**, for emergency use and **Covaxin** for restricted use.

About Covaxin :

- Covaxin is the indigenous vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.

About Serum Institute :

- CEO : Adar Poonawalla
- Founder : Cyrus S. Poonawalla
- Founded : 1966
- Headquarters : Pune

Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) releases Data on Police Organizations

- The **Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D)** released Data on **Police Organizations**.
- The BPR&D has been publishing the Data on Police Organizations (DoPO), annually, since the year
- DoPO as on 01.01.2019 was released by the Union Home Minister **Shri Amit Shah**, on 29th January, 2020.
- This is for the first time in the history of BPR&D that DoPO for a particular year has been released during the year itself.
- The number of people getting police protection across India stood at 19,467 in 2019 and 21,300 in 2018 a reduction of 1,833 (or 8.7 percent).
- The number of police personnel put on protection duty in 2018 and 2019 for ministers, MPs, MLAs, judges, bureaucrats, etc., outnumbered their sanctioned strength for the job by around 35 percent.

- West Bengal had the maximum of 3,142 people under police protection in 2019, followed by Punjab (2,594), Bihar (2,347) and Jammu and Kashmir (1,184).

About Bureau of Police Research & Development :

- Founded :28 August 1970
- Comes Under Ministry of Home Affairs
- Headquarters : New Delhi

Amit Shah releases 'National Police K-9 Journal'

- Home Minister **Amit Shah** released the inaugural issue of the **National Police K-9** Journal in New Delhi.
- It is the **first such publication** in the country on the subject of **Police Service K9s, Police Dogs**.
- This is a unique initiative that will further enrich the subjects related to Police Service Dog, K-9, PSK teams in the country.
- The event was attended by Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Directors General of Central Armed Police Forces and senior ranking Police Officers of the Forces, while CAPF personnel from all over the country attended through virtual conference.

About Police K9 Cell :

- A special Police K9 Cell was established in November last year under the Police Modernization Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs with the mandate of Mainstreaming and Augmentation of Police Service K9s in the country.
- The publication of the Police K9 Journal is another step in creating an ecosystem in the country to train and learn on augmenting this vital resource.
- The journal comprises different sections in **Hindi and English**.
- It is a biannual journal which will be released in **April and October every year**.

Karnataka Government Permitted all shops to remain open for 24x7

- All shops and commercial establishments employing ten or more people in **Karnataka** are now allowed to operate on a **24x7 basis**, the state government.
- The move is aimed at generating employment and accelerating economic growth.
- The permission is subject to the establishments which employ ten or more people.
- The state government also mandated that no employee will be made to work more than eight hours and in case of overtime the working hours should exceed ten hours a day and 48 hours in a week.

About Karnataka :

- Capital : Bangalore
- Chief Minister : B. S. Yediyurappa

FSSAI slashes limit for trans fat levels in foods

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has capped the amount of **trans fatty acids (TFA)** in oils and fats to **3% for 2021** and **2% by 2022** from the current permissible limit of 5%.
- This Regulation through an amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations.
- The revised regulation applies to edible refined oils, vanaspati (partially hydrogenated oils), margarine, bakery shortenings, and other mediums of cooking such as vegetable fat spreads and mixed fat spreads.
- India first passed the TFA limit of 10% in oils and fats in 2011.

What is Trans Fat :

- According to the World Health Organisation, trans fat, or trans-fatty acids, are unsaturated fatty acids that come from either natural or industrial sources. Naturally occurring trans fat comes from cows and sheep whereas industrially produced trans fat is formed in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to vegetable oil, converting the liquid into a solid, resulting in 'partially hydrogenated oil'.

About FSSAI :

- FSSAI has been created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- Founded : August 2011
- Headquarters : New Delhi
- Chairperson : Rita Teatia
- Comes under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Indian Railways to start train service connecting international airport

- **Indian Railways' South Western Railway zone** will start operating train services from Bengaluru city station to the **newly built KIA, Devanahalli Railway halt station**.
- According to South Western Railway, three pairs of DEMU services would be introduced from the Bengaluru area to the Kempegowda International Airport (KIAD) Halt Station from **January 4**.
- The new railway halt station is bound to benefit thousands of commuters daily

About Indian Railway:

- Founded : 16 April, 1853
- Headquarters : New Delhi
- Comes Under Ministry of Railways
- Railway Minister : Piyush Goyal

PM Modi to inaugurate Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will **dedicate the Kochi – Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline to the nation** through video conference.
- The **'futuristic project'**, PM Modi said, will positively impact many people.
- Modi said that it is a landmark day in India's quest for **Urja Aatmanirbharta**.
- He said, this is a futuristic project that will positively impact many people.
- The event marks an important milestone towards the creation of One Nation One Gas Grid.
- The **450 kilometre long pipeline** has been **built by GAIL (India)**
- It has a transportation capacity of **12 Million Metric Standard Cubic Metres per day**.
- It will carry natural gas from the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Regasification Terminal at Kochi, Kerala to Mangaluru, Karnataka, while passing through Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts.
- The total cost of the project was about **3000 crore** and its construction created over 12 lakh man-days of employment.
- **Kerala Chief Minister** Pinarayi Vijayan, **Karnataka Chief Minister** BS Yediyoorappa and **Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan** will participate in the inaugural function.

India begins 40th Scientific Expedition to Antarctica

- India launched the **40th Scientific Expedition to Antarctica**.
- This Indian expedition marks four decades of the country's scientific endeavour to the southern white continent.
- The **40th expedition journey** will be flagged off from Goa with **43 members onboard**.
- The chartered **ice-class vessel MV Vasiliy Golovnin** will make this journey and will reach Antarctica in **30 days**.
- After leaving behind a **team of 40 members**, it would return to India in April.
- On return, it will also bring back the winter team of the preceding trip.

Denmark's Oscar nominee 'Another Round' to be opening movie at 51st IFFI in Goa

- The **51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI)** will open on **16th January**, with the Indian premiere of the movie **'Another Round'** by **Thomas Vinterberg**.
- The movie starring Cannes Best Actor Award winner **Mads Mikkelsen** is among a star-studded line up of movies being showcased at IFFI. The movie is also Denmark's official entry to the Oscars.
- The festival will also witness the World Premier of 'Mehrunisa'. The film by Sandeep Kumar will premier mid-fest.

About the Festival :

- The festival will close on 24th January with the India Premier of the historical drama **Wife of a Spy** by Kiyoshi Kurosawa.
- The 51st IFFI is being organised from **16th to 24th January in Goa**.
- This edition is being organised in a hybrid mode for the first time and will comprise both online and in-person experience. The festival will be loaded with a line-up of famous movies with a total of 224 films from across the globe.

- This includes 21 non-feature films and 26 feature films under the Indian Panorama section. Media registration for the festival has opened recently and is available till 10th January.

Delhi government sets up Tamil Academy

- **Delhi Government Department of Art, Culture, and Language** has set up a **Tamil Academy** to Promote the language and culture of the southern state of Tamil Nadu.
- The Delhi government has appointed former municipal councillor and current member of Delhi Tamil Sangam **N Raja** as the vice-chairman of the academy.
- The Department of Art, Culture and Language of the Delhi government has decided that the new academy will introduce various awards to promote and reward the good works of people in Tamil language and culture.
- The government will also provide language courses through this academy.
- It will also celebrate and organise cultural festivals for the people of Tamil Nadu.

About Delhi:

- Chief Minister : Arvind Kejriwal

5-day national folk dance festival to start in Jammu

- North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala (Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India) and **Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture & Languages**, Jammu is jointly organizing **National Folk Dance Festival** from December 26-28.
- The festival is of **five days** and for three days it will be organised at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu.
- Artists from **Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Assam, Tripura, Maharashtra, Telangana and Haryana**, will participate in it.
- The festival is part of our efforts to bring together tribal artists from different regions of the country. Encourage them and ensure that arts forms are showcased to the people. It's a way to preserve the great cultural traditions of India.
- This Festival was inaugurated by Former Deputy CM, Kevinder Gupta, S D Singh Jamwal and senior Journalist Sohail Kazmi was also Present.

Udyog Manthan being organized from Jan 4 to March 2

- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** is organizing **Udyog Manthan** – a marathon of focused sector-specific webinars for promoting Quality and Productivity in Indian Industry.
- It got underway **Jan 4** and will go on till **2nd of March**.
- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will chair the session.
- The webinar series comprising 45 sessions will cover various major sectors in manufacturing and services. Each webinar will be a two-hour session involving discussions led by sectoral and industry experts in a particular sector.
- Participants will include representatives from industry, testing and standardization bodies.

Prasar Bharati digital channels grow 100% in 2020

- **Digital channels of Prasar Bharati** have registered more than **100 percent growth** in 2020, with Pakistan being the second highest digital audience for Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR).
- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated the channels across Doordarshan and Akashvani clocked over a billion digital views and over six billion digital watch minutes in the year.
- During 2020, Pakistan accounted for the second highest digital audience for DD and AIR content after domestic audience.
- During 2020, Prasar Bharati's mobile application 'NewsOnAir' added more than 2.5 million users with the platform registering over 300 million views.
- Prasar Bharati Archives and DD Kisan have been steady digital performers featuring in top 10.

About Pakistan :

- Capital : Islamabad
- President : Arif Alvi
- Currency : Pakistani rupee

Petroleum Minister Inaugurates Migrant Worker Cell in Surat

- **Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan** has inaugurated a migrant worker cell of **Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC)** at **Udhna based iLab** in Surat.
- Pradhan said that the migrant workers cell with linkage with the **city livelihood centre** will help extend all kinds of assistance and government-led benefits to them.
- Migrant workers' Cell has been created by Surat Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the '**National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme**'.
- The city has a presence of over **15 lakh** migrant workers.
- He said that this cell will do a detailed mapping of migrant workers and classify them according to their skill.
- This will help in connecting '**Shramshakti**' to relevant industries and boost their livelihood and also ensure their dignity.

About Gujarat :

- **Capital:** Gandhinagar
- **Governor:** Acharya Devvrat
- **Chief minister:** Vijay Rupani

Madhya Pradesh introduces 'Launch Pad Scheme' for unemployed youths

- In Madhya Pradesh, '**Launch Pad Scheme**' is being started for **boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age**.
- **Objective:** Women and Child Development Department is to provide such a platform to these youth, through which they will be able to become self-reliant by continuing their education and training.
- Under the launch pad scheme, 52 districts of the state have been divided into 5 clusters.

- Five divisional headquarters are being started in **Indore, Sagar, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Bhopal**.
- An amount of **Rs 6 lakh** will be provided by the Women and Child Development Department for the installation of each launch pad.
- These launch pads will be operated through **non-governmental organizations**.

About Madhya Pradesh:

- **Capital:** Bhopal
- **Chief minister:** Shivraj Singh Chouhan

CURRENT AFFAIRS: INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Joint working group on fisheries – Meeting held by India and Sri Lanka

- The **Fourth Meeting** of the **India-Sri Lanka** Joint Working Group on Fisheries was held through virtual mode.
- The meeting covered the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen and fishing boats which have been on the agenda of bilateral discussions between India and Sri Lanka for many years.
- It may be recalled that during the Virtual Bilateral Summit between **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa** held on 26 September this year, both leaders agreed to continue engagement to address the issues related to fishermen through regular consultation and bilateral channels.

About Sri Lanka:

- **Capital :** Colombo
- **Currency :** Rupee
- **Prime Minister :** Mahinda Rajapaksa
- **President :** Gotabaya Rajapaksa

US Congress passes 'Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act' for Pakistani women

- The **US Congress** has passed the **Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act** which will expand the number of scholarships available to **Pakistani women to receive higher education under a merit and needs-based programme**.
- The bill was passed by the United States Senate by a voice vote on **January 1**.
- The bill now heads to the White House for **US President Donald Trump** to sign into law.

About the bill :

- The bill requires the **US Agency for International Development to award at least 50 percent** of scholarships under a Pakistan-based higher education scholarship programme to Pakistani women, from 2020 to 2022, across a range of academic disciplines and in accordance with existing eligibility criteria.
- The bill also requires USAID to consult with and leverage investments by the Pakistani private sector and Pakistani diaspora in the United States to improve and expand access to education programmes in Pakistan.

About USAID :

- Headquarters : Washington, D.C
- Founded : 3 November 1961
- Founder : John F. Kennedy
- The USAID has awarded more than 6,000 scholarships for young women to receive higher education in Pakistan

About Malala Yousafzai :

- In October 2012, Malala was shot in the head by Pakistani Taliban on her way home from school. In late 2008, she began making the case for access to education for women and girls despite objections from the Pakistani Taliban.
- On October 10, 2014, Malala shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi for her "struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education".

India sends relief materials to Fiji

- India has sent over six tons of relief material to Fiji for its **cyclone-affected people**, reflecting its close ties with the **island nation in the South Pacific**.
- Fiji was hit by **cyclone Yasa** on December 17 and 18 that caused extensive damage and destruction of critical infrastructure.
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management is an important pillar of India's **Indo-Pacific Oceans'** Initiative announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2019.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs** said, India remains committed to extend full support to Fiji's efforts to restore livelihoods of the affected communities and to build resilient infrastructure.

About Fiji:

- **Capital:** Suva
- **Currency:** Fijian dollar
- **Prime Minister :** Frank Bainimarama

CURRENT AFFAIRS: AWARDS

'Lukoskin' developer Hemant Kumar Pandey gets DRDO's 'Scientist of the Year' award

- Senior scientist **Hemant Kumar Pandey** has been honoured with DRDO's '**Scientist of the Year Award**' for his contribution in developing several herbal medicines, including the popular drug Lukoskin meant for treatment of leucoderma.

About Hemant Kumar Pandey :

- A recipient of several prestigious awards for his contribution in the field of herbal medicine, Pandey has been undertaking research at the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) lab Defence Institute of Bio-Energy Research (DIBER) at Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand for the past 25 years.

SALEM INSTITUTE OF BANKING

- The Scientist has developed six herbal drugs so far, Lukoskin used for treating leucoderma or Vitiligo, a condition in which white patches develop on the skin, has been most widely appreciated and found huge acceptance in the market.

About DRDO :

- Chairman : Dr.G.Satheesh Reddy
- Headquarters : New Delhi

CURRENT AFFAIRS: BANKING

YES Bank appoints Niranjana Banodkar as new CFO

- The private sector lender **Yes Bank** has appointed **Niranjana Banodkar as a new Group Chief Financial Officer (CFO)**.
- He will supersede Anurag Adlakha, who has been designated as the **Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)**.
- Banodkar comes with 17 years of experience in Banking in financial planning and strategy, risk management and capital markets.
- Banodkar started working with Yes Bank in April 2006 and was a key member in setting up the Market Risk function.
- And then Both of them will assume the new role with effect from January 1, 2021.

About YES Bank :

- MD & CEO : Prashant Kumar
- Founder : Rana Kapoor
- Founded : 2004
- Headquarters : Mumbai

RBI working paper defends 4% inflation target for India

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** working paper has recommended that maintaining the inflation target at **4 percent** is appropriate for the country.
- The paper, authored by Harendra Kumar Behera and Michael Debabrata Patra, finds that there is a steady decline in trend inflation to 4.1-4.3 per cent since 2014.
- The RBI working paper, which seeks to examine whether the choice of the target for inflation is consistent with its trend, finds that the concept of trend inflation is vital for the design and conduct of monetary policy to which actual inflation outcomes are expected to converge after short run fluctuations from a variety of sources die out.

About RBI :

- Headquarters : Mumbai, Maharashtra
- Formation : 1 April, 1935
- Governor : Shaktikanta Das

Bajaj Auto Becomes World's Most Valuable Two-Wheeler Company

- **Bajaj Auto** has become the **first two-wheeler** company in the world to cross a market capitalization of **Rs 1 lakh crore**, making it the most valuable two-wheeler maker.
- The company's share price closed at Rs 3,479 per share on the NSE on January 1, 2021, making its market capitalisation Rs 1,00,670.76 crore at this price. This milestone comes as Bajaj celebrates the 75th year of its operations.
- Bajaj Auto is India's largest exporter of two-wheelers and three-wheelers.
- Bajaj Auto has three manufacturing facilities at Chakan, near Pune, Waluj near Aurangabad, and Pantnagar in Uttarakhand. Recently, the company announced to open its fourth plant with an investment of Rs 650 crore for manufacturing premium segment bikes and electric two-wheelers at Chakan.

About Bajaj Auto :

- Headquarters : Pune, Maharashtra
- Managing Director : Rajiv Bajaj

Jeff Bezos tops list of richest charitable gifts in 2020

- The world's richest person made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020, according to **The Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations**, a **\$10 billion gift** that is intended to help fight climate change.
- **Amazon's founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos**, whose "real-time" worth Forbes magazine estimates at roughly \$188 billion, used the contribution to launch his Bezos Earth Fund.

About Amazon

- **CEO:**Jeff Bezos
- **Founder:**Jeff Bezos
- **Headquarters:**Seattle, Washington, United States

Govt plans to launch seaplane services with airline operators

- The government is in the process to launch **seaplane services** on several routes, including **Delhi-Ayodhya**, in collaboration with the airline operators, the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- The development follows the launch of a seaplane service between **Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31, 2020.
- The seaplane services to facilitate faster and hassle-free travel across the country will prove to be a game-changer, it said.
- "**Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)** is initiating the process of commencing operations of the Seaplane services, on the select routes, under a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) framework through prospective airline operators," an official statement said.
- The project execution and implementation would be through **Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL)**, which is under the administrative control of the ministry.

- **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** :Mansukh L. Mandaviya, Minister of State (Independent Charge)

Indian student Harsh Dalal's startup wins recognition in Singapore

- A **19-year-old Indian student** in Singapore is keeping his options open on a startup named "**TEAMLABS**" he has built with four applications in his teenage while schooling.
- While keeping up with his schooling for a diploma in business administration at **Singapore Polytechnic, Harsh Dalal, as CEO, has built 120-employee Team Labs' business across eight cities.**
- The **software development company's clients include** the Coca-Cola Company, Google and Hilton, featuring Dalal among young entrepreneurs shaping Singapore into a smart nation and for running a USD 25 million tech startup under "**On The Red Dot**" finds out programme.
- He picked up coding at the age of 11 by spending hours watching YouTube tutorials and went on to jailbreak a cast-off iPhone 4, a gift from his mother, a business journalist.

City Union Bank introduces whatsapp banking option

- Tamil Nadu-based City Union Bank (CUB) is now available on India's most popular messaging application—
- The bank has recently launched a **new Video KYC** facility through which anyone can open a new bank account from the comfort of the home or office, as a next step towards digitisation, through the platform.
- With CUB's "Whatsapp Banking" service, customers can get a **variety of information** and can register for the services by sending 'Hi' to the bank's customer care number '**044-71225000**' through Whatsapp.
- **Services offered through the platform** include Instance Account Openings, Account Balance Enquiry, Deposit Opening, Deposits Balance Enquiry, Mini Statement, Green PIN for Net/Mobile Banking, Bill Payment, Card Blocking and several others.

About City Union Bank:

- CEO: Dr. N. Kamakodi
- Headquarters: Kumbakonam
- Founded: 1904

RBI introduces the Digital Payments Index

- The **Reserve Bank of India** has constructed a composite **Digital Payments Index (DPI)** to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.
- The RBI-DPI comprises **5 broad parameters** that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods.
- These parameters are
 1. Payment Enablers (weight 25%),
 2. Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%),
 3. Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%),
 4. Payment Performance (45%) and

5. Consumer Centricity (5%).

- The RBI-DPI has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period, i.e. DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100. The DPI for March 2019 and March 2020 work out to 153.47 and 207.84 respectively, indicating appreciable growth.
- RBI-DPI shall be published on RBI's website on a semi-annual basis from March 2021 onwards with a lag of 4 months.
- The base period for RBI-DPI is March 2018.
- This means that the DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100.

About RBI :

- Headquarters : Mumbai
- Founder : British Raj
- Governor : Shaktikanta Das
- Bank Rate : 4.00%
- Repo Rate :5.15%
- Reverse Repo Rate :4.90%

Bank of Baroda offers WhatsApp banking services

- State-run Bank of Baroda announced the launch of **banking services** on messaging platform
- The lender is **offering services** such as balance enquiry, mini statement, cheque status enquiry, cheque book request, blocking debit card and information on products and services, among others via WhatsApp, a release said.
- **The bank's executive director AK Khurana** said that "With the growing prominence of social media, we believe that WhatsApp banking will offer immense convenience to our customers to meet their banking requirements".
- To activate the banking facility on **WhatsApp**, need to save **WhatsApp number 8433 888 777 of Bank of Baroda (BoB) in phone book.**

About BOB:

- **Headquarters:**Alkapuri, Vadodara
- **Present non-executive Chairman :** Hasmukh Adhia
- **Tagline :** India's International Bank.

UNDP and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation to co-create India's first Social Impact Bond

- **Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC)** recently signed an MoU with UNDP India to co-create India's first **Social Impact Bond (SIB)**.
- As part of this unique investment tool, the PCMC administration will only have to bear the costs of a public welfare project associated with the bond.
- The introduction of the SIB will attract more investors from public and private sectors to fund public welfare projects and thus help to meet the investment deficit
- The Palladium Group has been appointed for design and structuring expertise for the impact bond.

About UNDP :

- Representative : Shoko Noda
- Headquarters : New Delhi
- Established : 1951

About PCMC :

- Headquarters : Pune, Maharashtra
- Commissioner : Mr, Shravan Hardikar

CURRENT AFFAIRS: MOU

Karnataka signs three agreements with different firms

- Karnataka signs **three agreements** with different firms to **impart skill training to youths for jobs abroad**.
- The Deputy Chief Minister and minister for higher education **C N Ashwath Narayana** has informed that the state has signed **three agreements** with different firms to impart skill training to the youths of the state for fetching them jobs abroad.
- **THREE AGREEMENTS**
 - The ITI trained youth will be further trained by **Peenya Industrial Association member industries**.
 - A **skill university** has come forward to train the apprentice in various trades.
 - A learning foundation has come forward to **train ITI students in entrepreneurship**.
- **Ashwath Narayana** said that these trainings will shape up human resources by imparting them skills that meet the contemporary requirements of the industries.
- He added that these agreements are in line with the **new National Education Policy**.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Bhutan

- Cabinet approves MoU between **India and Bhutan on Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space**.
- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of the Republic of India and the Royal Government of Bhutan on Cooperation in the peaceful users of outer space signed on November 19, 2020 by both sides at Bangalore/Thimpu and exchanged.
- This MoU shall enable India and Bhutan to pursue cooperation in potential interest areas, such as remote sensing of the earth.
- Satellite communication and satellite based navigation.
- Space science and planetary exploration; use of spacecraft and space systems and ground systems; and application of space technology.

About Bhutan:

- **Capital:**Thimphu
- **Prime minister:**Lotay Tshering

India to be a co-chair of regional forum to conserve wildlife habitats - Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP)

- **India** has been chosen as the IUCN-supported **Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP)** for **3 years** and it could, on this capability, help different Asian nations in managing their protected areas.

About APAP :

- The APAP is a regional platform to assist governments and different stakeholders to collaborate for more practical administration of protected areas (PA) within the region.
- The APAP presently consists of **21 members from 17 nations** together with China, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- The APAP, formally launched at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Australia in 2014, is chaired by IUCN Asia and co-chaired by an APAP nation member.
- India will substitute South Korea which held this place for 3 years until November, 2020.
- Currently there are 21 members from 17 international locations.

About IUCN :

- Headquarters : Gland, Switzerland
- CEO : Grethel Aguilar
- Founder : Julian Huxley
- Founded : 5 Oct 1948

ADB to provide \$100 million loan to upgrade power distribution in Bengaluru

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** will provide a **USD 100 million (around Rs 730 crore)** loan to **modernise and upgrade** the power distribution system in **Bengaluru city**.
- Beside the USD 100 million sovereign loan, ADB will provide a USD 90 million loan without sovereign guarantee for the project to Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Ltd (BESCOM), one of the five state-owned distribution utilities in Karnataka.

About the Project :

- In parallel to underground distribution cables, over 2,800 km of fibre optical cables will be installed to strengthen communication networks. Moving about 7,200 km of distribution lines underground will help reduce technical and commercial losses by about 30 per cent.
- The fibre optical cables will be used for smart metering systems, distribution automation system (DAS) in the distribution grid, and other communication networks.
- The project will install 1,700 automated ring main units adapted with a DAS to monitor and control the distribution line switchgears from the control centre.
- The loan will strengthen the capacity of BESCOM in operation and maintenance of underground cabling, environment and social safeguards, financial management and commercial financing.
- Improved financial management capability will help BESCOM access the domestic and international commercial financing market.

About ADB :

- Headquarters : Mandaluyong, Philippines
- President : Masatsugu Asakawa
- Founded : 19 December, 1966

About Karnataka :

- Chief Minister : B.S.Yeddyurappa
- Governor : Vajubhai Vala
- Capital : Bangalore

MoU signed between NBCC & JKIT in Jammu, Srinagar

- In an effort to bring about reforms in the Information Technology (IT) sector in Jammu and Kashmir, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between **National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) and JK IT Infrastructure Development Company** for establishing **IT towers** in the cities of Jammu and Srinagar.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of **Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha**.
- The IT towers would be established at a cost of **Rs 50 crore each**.

CURRENT AFFAIRS: DEFENCE NEWS

BEL signs contract with Indian Navy for Initial Supply of indigenously developed Laser Dazzlers

- **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** has signed a contract with **Indian Navy** for initially supplying **20 Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation Dazzlers (Laser Dazzlers)** in New Delhi.
- The BEL had earlier this month won the contract beating global **Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)** in the global category.
- These would be manufactured by BEL, **Pune plant**.
- Laser dazzler technology was developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- This unique product is indigenously designed and developed for the first time for the Armed Forces.

About Laser Dazzler

- The Laser Dazzler is used as a non-lethal method for warning and stopping suspicious vehicles/boats/aircrafts/UAVs/pirates etc. from approaching secured areas during both day and night.
- It is capable of dazzle and thereby suppress the person's/optical sensor's action with disability glare in case of non-compliance to orders. It disorient/ confuse/blind a person temporarily.
- It also dazzles and distracts aircraft/UAVs. It is a portable, shoulder operated and ruggedized for military use in adverse environmental conditions.

About DRDO :

- Comes Under Ministry of Defence
- Founded : 1958
- Headquarters : New Delhi

About Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) :

- Headquarters : Bangalore
- Founded : 1954

Indian Army inks pact with Goa Shipyard to get 12 fast patrol boats for Pangong Tso lake by May

- **Indian Army** has inked a contract with M/s Goa Shipyard Limited for **12 Fast Patrol Boats** for surveillance and patrolling of large water bodies, including those in high altitude areas. Delivery would commence from May 2021.
- Indian Army would soon be getting high-powered and bigger capacity boats to meet the strength of the Chinese vessels.
- It is the Pangong lake that's been the sticking point with the Chinese troops occupying areas on the northern bank of the lake that had been in India's control.
- The indigenously built strong boats will have better anti-ramming capabilities and an enhanced capacity to accommodate additional troops.
- The new boats will be stronger with more capacity and are being manufactured in India," said an official privy to the developments.
- The need to upgrade boats used to patrol the Pangong Tso lake was felt in the wake of the military tussle between the Indian and the Chinese troops, and the continued standoff across the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.

About Indian Army :

- Founded : 1 April, 1895
- Headquarters : New Delhi
- Army Staff : General Manoj Mukund Naravane

GRSE delivers eighth landing craft utility ship to Indian Navy

- On December 31, 2020, Kolkata-based, **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)**, delivered the last ship of the **MK IV Landing Craft Utility (LCU)** class vessel '**IN LCU L-58**' (Yard 2099) to the **Indian Navy**.
- The amphibious ships, to be based in the strategic location of Andaman and Nicobar Islands which is close to various routes leading to the South China Sea.
- LCU L-58 is the eighth and final ship in the series of 8 LCUs manufactured by GRSE for the Indian Navy.

About LCU Ship :

- The LCU ships, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, were developed in-house with 90 per cent of its parts indigenously manufactured.

- These ships are very unique in their design and class in the world. A very specific kind of requirement was given by the Indian Navy speed of 15 knots, a displacement of 900- odd tonnes and a low draught for beaching in the shallowest of waters.
- The ships are designed to accommodate 216 personnel and have two indigenous CRN 91 guns to provide artillery fire support during landing operations.

About GRSE :

- Headquarters : Kolkata, West Bengal
- Founded : 1884
- Chairman & Managing Director : Rear Admiral V K Saxena

CURRENT AFFAIRS: APPOINTMENTS

Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan nominated to the Board of GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance

- On 29th December, 2020 **Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare was nominated by the **Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI)** as a member of the GAVI Board.
- The seat is currently held by **Myint Htwe of Myanmar**.
- Harsh Vardhan will be representing the South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/ Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board.
- Harsh Vardhan will be representing India from 1st January 2021 until 31st December 2023.
- The Board normally meets twice a year in June and November/ December and holds an annual retreat, normally in March or April

About GAVI Board:

- The vaccine alliance GAVI is an international organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland, that provides a forum for balanced strategic decision-making, innovation and partner collaboration.
- The GAVI board is responsible for strategic direction and policy-making oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.
- GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance as part of its mission to save lives, reduce poverty and protect the world against the threat of epidemics, has helped vaccinate more than 822 million children in the world's poorest countries, preventing more than 14 million future deaths.
- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala presently serves as Chair of the GAVI Alliance Board.

Justice S Muralidhar Takes Oath as Chief Justice of Orissa High Court

- On January 04, Justice **S Muralidhar** took oath as the **32nd Chief Justice of Orissa High Court**.
- Governor of Odisha Prof. Ganeshi Lal administered the oath of office at Raj Bhawan in **Bhubaneswar** in a simple ceremony.
- Justice S Muralidhar succeeds Justice **Mohammad Rafiq** as the new chief justice of the Orissa High Court.

- S Muralidhar was appointed as an Additional Judge of Delhi High Court on May 29, 2006, and as Permanent Judge on August 29, 2007.
- Later, he was transferred to Punjab and Haryana High Court on March 6, 2020.

About Orissa :

- Capital : Bhubaneswar
- Governor : Ganeshi Lal
- Chief Minister : Naveen Patnaik

Justice Vineet Kothari took oath as Gujarat HC Judge

- Justice **Vineet Kothari** took oath as a **Judge in Gujarat High Court**.
- He was previously an **Acting Chief Justice in Madras High Court**.
- He was transferred to Gujarat High Court on recommendation of a **five Judge collegium led by the Chief Justice of India**.
- He was elevated as a judge of the Rajasthan High Court in 2005 and was transferred to Karnataka in 2016.
- He had assumed charge as the senior-most judge of the Madras High Court on 23rd November, 2018 and had served as its Additional Chief Justice immediately after former Chief Justice Vijaya Kamlesh Tahilramani resigned in September 2019 and once again after the retirement of Chief Justice Amreshwar Pratap Sahi.

Pankaj Mithal takes oath as new chief justice of J&K and Ladakh high court

- On January 04, 2021, Lieutenant Governor **Manoj Sinha** administered the oath of office to Justice Pankaj Mithal as the new chief justice of the common high court for the Union Territory of **Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh**.
- Chief justice **Mithal** has been appointed in view of the retirement of chief justice Gita Mittal recently.
- Chief Justice Mithal was administered the oath of office by Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha.

CURRENT AFFAIRS: BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Late Justice Rajindar Sachar's Autobiography: 'In Pursuit of Justice'

- On 29 December 2020, The autobiography of late **Justice Rajindar Sachar**, titled, **In Pursuit of Justice: An Autobiography**, was launched posthumously by Sachar's family on the occasion of his birth anniversary.
- He passed away on April 20, 2018, at the age of 94 in Delhi.
- The book has been posthumously published.
- The book was launched through a virtual platform, in association with The Indian Society of International Law and The Indian Law Institute.

About The Book :

- The book is a story of a great jurist who was an even greater human being, as he delivered a lot to the society and did not allow politics to cloud his judgements.

About Justice Rajindar Sachar :

- Rajindar Sachar (22 December 1923 – 20 April 2018) was an Indian lawyer and a former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court.
- He was a member of the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and also served as a counsel for the People's Union for Civil Liberties.
- Sachar chaired the Sachar Committee, constituted by the Government of India, which submitted a report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India.
- On 16 August 2011 Sachar was arrested in New Delhi during protests over the detention of Anna Hazare and his supporters.

CURRENT AFFAIRS: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

DRDO facility develops Quantum Random Number Generator

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has achieved a milestone in quantum technology by successfully developing a **Quantum Random Number Generator (QRNG)**.
- The facility has developed a fiber-optic branch path based QRNG.
- Random numbers have essential roles in various fields ranging from quantum communication, cryptography applications like key generation, key wrapping, authentication along with scientific simulations, lotteries and fundamental physics experiments.
- On December 8, the DRDO announced that their Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology underwent a successful trial between two laboratories in Hyderabad.

About DRDO:

- Founded : 1958
- Headquarters : New Delhi

India launches first remote monitoring system for oil refineries

- **Indian Oil Corp (IOC)**, the country's largest fuel retailer, announced it has launched the country's first remote monitoring system for oil refineries' turbines. The project, located in **Hyderabad, was inaugurated by oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan.**
- The Remote Monitoring & Operation Centre for Tracking of Indian Oil's Refinery Gas Turbines was implemented by **BHEL-GE Gas Turbine Services (BGGTS)**, a joint venture of BHEL and General Electric.
- The technology called Proactive Predictive Analytics-based Automated Anomaly Detection will allow Gas Turbine Operational Data flowing in digitally from 27 turbines of the eight IndianOil refineries to be analysed round-the-clock in Hyderabad.
- This analysis will help in detection and diagnosis of emerging issues relating to gas turbines before they become critical and trigger corrective actions. This will help avoid refinery process unit shutdowns.

About IOC :

- IOC Chairman S M Vaidya

- Headquarters : New Delhi

About BGGTS :

- Chairman : Kamalesh Das
- Headquarters : Hyderabad, Telangana

IAF Chief, Air Marshal R K S Bhaduria launches IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal in New Delhi

- Indian Air Force Chief, Air Marshal **R K S Bhaduria** formally launched the **IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal in Vayu Bhavan, New Delhi**.
- The launch of the portal is part of **Digital India** and **e-governance** initiative that will transform the entire **Indian Air Force** into a paperless office workflow.
- The platform will ensure enhanced transparency, improved efficiency, increased accountability, assured data integrity and rapidly accessible archives along with a major reduction in the use of paper.

ISRO to launch first satellite developed entirely by Brazil's space agency

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro)** is set to launch **Amazonia-1**, the first satellite to have been developed completely in **Brazil** by the **National Institute for Space Research (INPE)**, the Latin American nation's apex space research body.
- Emirates SkyCargo, the freight division of Emirates airline, has executed a cargo charter to transport Amazonia-1 from Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil to Chennai. This is the first time that Emirates SkyCargo has transported a space satellite from South America.
- The satellite is due to be sent to space in **February 2021** from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** on the East coast of India.
- India and Brazil signed a Framework Agreement for cooperation in the field of outer space in January 2004. Apart from this, an agreement on the programme of cooperation between the two space agencies was also signed. Under this, Brazil received data from ISRO's remote sensing satellite ResourceSAT-1.
- The two countries, in July 2014, also signed an agreement on cooperation to alter a Brazilian earth station to receive and process data from the Indian Remote Sensing satellites (IRS) series.

About Amazonia-1 :

- Amazonia-1 is a Sun synchronous (polar) orbiting satellite that can generate images of any part of the world every five days. For this, it has a wide-view optical imager (camera with 3 visible frequency bands – VIS – and 1 near infrared band – Near Infrared or NIR) with a swath of 850 km and 60 meters of resolution.
- The Amazonia series satellites are composed of two independent modules: a Service Module, which is the Multi-Mission Platform (MMP), and a Payload Module, which houses image cameras and equipment for recording and transmitting image data.

About Indian Space Research Organisation :

- Founder : Vikram Sarabhai

SALEM INSTITUTE OF BANKING

- Founded : 15 August 1969
- Director : Kai;asavadivoo Sivan

About Brazil :

- Presidente : Jair Bolsonaro
- Capital : Brasilia
- Currency : Brazilian real

CURRENT AFFAIRS: SUMMITS & CONFERENCES

PM inaugurates National Metrology Conclave 2021a

- **Prime Minister** inaugurates **National Metrology Conclave 2021** through video conferencing.
- National Metrology Conclave 2021 was organised by the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi**.
- Science and Technology Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan and Director General, CSIR, Shekhar Mande and Principal Scientific Adviser to the Central Government, Professor K VijayRaghavan were also present on the occasion.
- Theme of 2021 : Meteorology for the Inclusive Growth of the Nation.
- He also The National Atomic Time Scale generates Indian Standard Time with an accuracy of 2.8 nanosecond. Bhartiya Niradeshak Dravya aims at supporting testing and calibration of laboratories for quality assurance, at par with international standards.

CURRENT AFFAIRS: SPORTS NEWS

Leon Mendonca becomes India's 67th chess Grandmaster

- Goa's 14-year-old **Leon Mendonca** has become India's **67th chess GrandMaster (GM)** by winning the third and final norm at a tournament in Italy.
- Mendonca, who achieved the feat at 14 years, 9 months and 17 days, is the second GM from the Coastal State.
- The **All India Chess Federation (AICF)** acknowledged the development. Leon is the second Indian to become GM this year after G. Akash.
- He achieved his first GM norm at the Rigo Chess GM Round Robin in October while the second came at the first Saturday in Budapest in November. His final GM norm came at the Vergani Cup in Italy that ended on December 30.
- GM is a title awarded by FIDE (International Chess Federation). It is the highest title a chess player can obtain apart from World Champion.

About International Chess Federation :

- President : Arkady Dvokovich
- Headquarters : Lausanne, Switzerland
- Founded : 20 July, 1924

CURRENT AFFAIRS: DAYS

World Braille Day Observed on January 04

- **World Braille Day** is observed every year on **4 January** to celebrate the importance of braille, a form of communication and written language for people who are blind and visually challenged.
- The day commemorates the birth anniversary of **Louis Braille**, the man who invented braille in the year 1809.
- **Aim of the day** : The day aims to raise awareness about braille language and other forms of communication, As many establishments such as banks, restaurants, hospitals still don't offer braille versions of their printed materials, the day serves as a reminder of the importance of accessibility and independence for people who are visually impaired.

Significance of World Braille Day

- World Braille day spreads awareness about braille and highlights the fact that the system of communication is still missing from many establishments around the world.
- The date for World Braille Day was chosen by the United Nations General Assembly via a proclamation in November 2018. The first world Braille Day was celebrated on 4 January 2019.

What is Braille?

- Braille is a tangible representation of alphabetic and numerical symbols in which letters and numbers are represented using six dots. It is even used in depicting musical, mathematical and scientific symbols. Braille is named after Louis Braille, who invented it for blind and partially sighted people in 19th century, France.
- Braille is considered important in terms of education, freedom of expression and opinion, as well as social inclusion, as reflected in article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

National Bird Day: Observed on January 05

- In 2002, Born Free USA in coordination with the **Avian Welfare Coalition** launched the first annual National Bird Day to promote avian awareness.
- Nature lovers, bird lovers, and bird watchers across the country annually recognize **National Bird Day** on January 5th.
- According to Born Free USA, nearly **12 percent of the world's almost 10,000 bird species** are in danger of extinction.

CURRENT AFFAIRS: OBITUARIES

Former Indian footballer and Olympian Nikhil Nandy passes away at 88

- Former Indian footballer **Nikhil Nandy**, was a part of the squad in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, died on December 29, 2020. He was 88.
- Nandy was part of the triumphant Bengal squad which won the Santosh Trophy in 1955. He had also won the Calcutta Football League with Eastern Railways back in 1958.
- Nandy also had a coaching stint with the National Team, as he took charge of the Blue Tigers dugout, jointly with J. Kittu

Former Union minister and Congress leader Buta Singh passes away

- **Former Union minister, ex-MP from Rajasthan and Congress leader Buta Singh** passed away. He was 86.

About Buta Singh :

- Born in 1934 in Punjab's Jalandhar, Buta Singh joined the Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership and was close to Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, both.
- Mr Singh was first elected to the Parliament in 1962.
- He also served as the Home Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government from 1986 to 1989, National President of Scheduled Caste Commission, governor for West Bengal and Bihar, and Union minister for Agriculture, Railways, Commerce and Sports, among other departments.
- He subsequently held many positions including those of the Union home minister and Union agriculture minister.
- He was the chairperson of the National Commission For Scheduled Caste from 2007 to 2010.
- He also authored a collection of articles on Punjabi literature and Sikh history and wrote a book Punjabi Speaking State: A Critical Analysis.

Odia music maestro Shantanu Mohapatra dies at 84 in Bhubaneswar

- **Legendary Odia music director Shantanu Mohapatra** died in **Bhubaneswar** on December 30 .He was 84 years old.
- Born at **Baripada in Mayurbhanj** district in 1936.
- Shantanu Mohapatra was the first Odia music director to work with acclaimed singers and music composers of the Hindi film industry.
- These included Lata Mangeshkar (Surjyamukhi), Mohd Rafi (Arundhati), Manna Dey (Surjyamukhi), Usha Mangeskar (Arundhati) and other artists like Suresh Wadekar, Anuradha Paudwal, Usha Uthup, Kavita Krishnamurthy, etc.
- He composed the first modern lullaby in AIR, first qawali, first bhangra tune, and first fusion and jumping note.
- Mohapatra was a geophysicist and had worked with Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC).
- In honour of his lifetime contribution to Odia culture, the Utkal University of Culture had conferred honorary D.Litt on him in 2011.

Former Maharashtra minister Vilas Patil Undalkar passes away at 82

- Former Maharashtra cabinet minister and seven-time Congress MLA **Vilas Patil Undalkar** He was 82.
- He is an old Congress hand, Undalkar, popularly known as '**kaka**', was elected seven times till 2014 from **Karad-South Assembly** seat, now represented by senior party leader **Prithviraj Chavan**.
- In the 2014 state Assembly elections, the Congress denied ticket to Undalkar and fielded Chavan.
- Undalkar served as minister in the law and justice and cooperative departments during the previous Congress-led state governments.

About Maharashtra:

- Governor : Bhagat Singh Koshyari
- Chief Minister : Uddhav Thackeray
- Capital : Mumbai

Olympic bronze and World Cup winner hockey player Michael Kondo passes away

- India's 1975 hockey World Cup-winning and 1972 Olympics bronze winning team member **Michael Kondo** He was 73.

Achievements:

- Kondo, who was part of India's 1975 hockey World Cup-winning and 1972 Olympics bronze medal-winning teams, was conferred with the **Arjuna Award in 1972**.
- The defender contributed to India clinching the bronze medal at the 1972 Olympics by scoring three goals as well.
- He won a bronze in Olympic Games and all 3 categories of medals in World Cups.



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