

Important Monthly Current Affairs – March 2020

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IMPORTANT DAYS

Date	Day	Theme
March 1 to 7	Janaushadhi Week	-
March 1	Zero Discrimination Day	Zero Discrimination against Women and Girls
March 3	World Wildlife Day	Sustaining all life on Earth
March 3	World Hearing Day	Hearing for Life: Don't let hearing loss limit you
March 4	National Safety Day	-
March 6	National Dentist's Day	-
March 7	Jan Aushadhi Diwas	-
March 8	International Women's Day	I am Generation Equality': Realizing Women's Rights
March 10	CISF Raising Day	-
2 nd Wednesday of March	No Smoking Day	-
2 nd Thursday of March	World Kidney Day	Kidney health for everyone everywhere – from prevention to detection and equitable access to care
Friday before Spring Vernal Equinox	World Sleep Day	BetterSleep, Better Life, Better Planet
March 14	International Pi Day	-
March 14	International Day of Action for Rivers	Women, Water, and Climate Change
March 15	World Consumer Day	The Sustainable Consumer'
March 16	National Vaccination Day	Vaccines Work for All
March 18	Ordnance Factories Day	-
March 18	Global Recycling Day	Recycling Heroes
March 20	International Day of Happiness	Hapines for All
March 20	World Sparrow Day	I Love Sparrows
March 20	World Frog Day	-
March 20	World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People	Take Child to the Theatre Today
March 20	World Oral Health Day	Unite for Mouth Health
March 21	World Forestry Day	Biodiversity
March 21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	-
March 21	World Down Syndrome Day	We Decide
March 21	World Poetry Day	-

March 22	World Water Day	Water and Climate Change
Mach 23	World Meterological Day	Climate and Water
March 23	Martyrs Day	-
March 24	Wold Tuberculosis Day	It's TIME
March 24	International Day for the Right to the Truth	-
March 25	International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade	Confronting Slavery's Legacy of Racism Together
March 25	International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members	-
March 27	World Theatre Day	-
Last Saturday of March	Earth Hour	-

Important Banking News

RBI

Merger of 10 state-run banks into 4 to come into force from April 1: RBI

- **Reserve Bank of India** has stated that the merger of **10 state-run banks** into **four** will come into force from **April 1**. The branches of merging banks will operate as of the banks in which these have been amalgamated.
- The government on March 4 had notified the amalgamation schemes for 10 state owned banks into four as part of its consolidation plan to create bigger size stronger banks in the public sector.
- As per the scheme, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will be merged into Punjab National Bank; Syndicate Bank into Canara Bank; Allahabad Bank into Indian Bank; and Andhra and Corporation banks into Union Bank of India.
- Under this, the branches of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will operate as branches of Punjab National Bank from April 1, and branches of Syndicate Bank as that of Canara Bank.
- It informed that Allahabad Bank branches will operate as those of Indian Bank while the branches of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank will function as the branches of Union Bank of India from the beginning of next fiscal year 2020-21.
- Customers, including depositors of merging banks will be treated as customers of the banks in which these banks have been merged with effect from April 1, 2020.

RBI's new measures will see banks' dependence on CDs, TDs coming down

- The requirement of **certificates of deposits (CDs)** and **term deposits (TDs)** for banks will come down while their rates could see downward pressure in the wake of the Reserve Bank of India providing long-term funding at a fixed rate

(current average rate 5.15 per cent) along with the relaxation in **cash reserve ratio (CRR)** for incremental loan book growth in certain segments, according to India Ratings (Ind-Ra).

- The recent measures announced by the RBI – provision of long-term funding via the **long-term repo operation (LTRO)** facility and limited CRR relaxation to encourage credit flow to the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) and consumer segments (auto and housing) – will encourage banks to extend credit to the retail and MSME segments, the credit rating agency stated.
- Ind-Ra believes the short-term requirement of funds for banks will further diminish amid a low demand for credit, but the Profit and Loss (P&L) impact of CRR relaxation is expected to be limited (₹600 crore per annum for the system for the next five years).
- Under the LTRO facility, RBI provides one-year and three-year money to banks at the repo rate to improve transmission of changes in the repo rate to banks' lending rates. CRR is the slice of deposit that banks have to park with the RBI. Currently, CRR is at 4 per cent of deposits. Banks don't earn anything on CRR.

RBI cuts repo rate by 75 basis points

- Reverse repo rate slashed by 90 bps
- To help the economy fight the Covid-19 pandemic, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) slashed the repo rate by **75 basis points to 4.40 per cent from 5.15 per cent**.
- Simultaneously, the reverse repo rate has been cut sharply by 90 basis points to **4 per cent from 4.90 per cent**, to ensure that banks don't passively park funds with RBI and start lending to the productive sectors of the economy.
- The banking system will become flush with liquidity aggregating ₹3.74 lakh crore as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has, among others, decided to cut the cash reserve ratio (CRR) to **3 per cent from 4 per cent** and decided to conduct more **long-term repo operation (LTRO)**.
- CRR cut, which will be effective for a year, will result in infusion of primary liquidity for banks aggregating ₹1.37 lakh crore.
- RBI has also declared a three month moratorium on payment of instalment on all term loans. It also allowed deferment of servicing of working capital loans (cash credit/ overdraft) for three months.
- These measures, which are aimed at helping borrowers and banks tide over the crisis arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, will not lead to asset classification downgrade, stated Governor Shaktikanta Das.
- The moratorium/ deferment will be available for loans outstanding as on **March 1, 2020**

RBI offers Rs 11,722 cr to banks through repo auction

- The Reserve Bank of India has offered **Rs 11,772 crore** to banks through a 12-day variable rate repo auction. Before the auction, the RBI enhanced the amount of auction to **Rs 50,000 crore from Rs 25,000 crore**, announced earlier.
- In the auction, the central bank received Rs 11,772 crore of bids and allocated the entire amount at a cut-off rate of **5.16 per cent**.
- RBI had advanced this auction from **March 30** due to the evolving financial conditions and taking into account the impact of disruptions caused by COVID-19.

- It will conduct another variable term repo auction of Rs 25,000 crore on March 31.

RBI doubles the variable rate repo auction amount to ₹50,000 cr

- The **Reserve Bank** has doubled the amount of the **12-day variable rate term repo auction** scheduled to **Rs50,000 crore**.
- This auction was originally scheduled on March 30. But the RBI decided to advance it to March 26. The auction was advanced in view of the rapidly evolving financial conditions and taking into account the impact of disruptions caused by COVID-19.
- The RBI is conducting these auctions to address any additional demand for liquidity and to provide flexibility to the banking system in year-end liquidity management.
- As a special case, **Standalone Primary Dealers (SPDs)** were also allowed to participate in these auctions along with other eligible participants.
- The RBI will be conducting a **3-day variable rate term repo auction** for **Rs25,000 crore** on **March 31**

RBI extends priority sector classification for bank loans to NBFCs to FY21

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to extend priority sector classification for bank loans to **non-banking finance companies (NBFCs)** for on-lending for FY 2020-21.
- As per the August 2019 circular, bank credit to registered NBFCs (other than microfinance institutions) for on-lending was eligible for classification as priority sector up to **March 31, 2020**.
- A bank can classify fresh loans sanctioned by NBFCs to the priority sector -- agriculture, micro & small enterprises (MSEs) and housing -- out of bank borrowings.
- In its latest circular, the RBI also stated that existing loans disbursed under the on-lending model will continue to be classified under the Priority Sector till the date of repayment/maturity.
- Bank credit to registered NBFCs (other than MFIs) for on-lending is classified as priority sector under respective categories subject to conditions -- on-lending by NBFCs for the 'term lending' component under agriculture is allowed up to ₹10 lakh per borrower; on-lending to micro & small enterprises is allowed up to **₹20 lakh per borrower**; and on-lending by housing finance companies (HFCs) for housing is allowed up to ₹20 lakh per borrower.
- The RBI stated Bank credit to registered NBFCs (other than MFIs) and HFCs for on-lending will be allowed up to an overall limit of 5 per cent of the individual bank's total priority sector lending

RBI to regulate activities of payment aggregators

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** stated it will regulate in entirety the activities of **payment aggregators (PAs)** and provide baseline technology-related recommendations to **payment gateways (PGs)** in view of the important functions of these intermediaries in the online payments space as also their role vis-à-vis handling funds.
- PAs are entities that facilitate e-commerce sites and merchants to accept various payment instruments from customers for completion of their payment obligations without the need for merchants to create a separate payment integration system of their own.

- As per RBI guidelines on Regulation of Payment Aggregators and Payment Gateways, non-bank PAs shall require authorisation from RBI under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSSA)**.
- Banks provide PA services as part of their normal banking relationship and do not therefore require a separate authorisation from RBI.
- A PA should be a company incorporated in India under the **Companies Act, 1956 / 2013**.
- Existing non-bank entities offering PA services are required to apply for authorisation on or before June 30, 2021. They shall be allowed to continue their operations till they receive communication from RBI regarding the fate of their application.
- Commercial marketplaces providing PA services shall not continue this activity beyond the deadline prescribed above. If they desire to pursue this activity, it should be separated from the marketplace business and they should apply for authorization on or before June 30, 2021.
- PGs will be considered as '**technology providers**' or '**outsourcing partners**' of banks or non-banks, as the case may be.
- Existing PAs have to achieve a net worth of ₹15 crore by March 31, 2021 and a net worth of ₹25 crore on or before March 31, 2023. The net worth of ₹25 crore has to be maintained at all times thereafter.
- New PAs should have a minimum net worth of **₹5 crore** at the time of application for authorisation and have to attain a net worth of **₹25 crore** by the end of the third financial year of the grant of authorisation. The net worth of ₹25 crore has to be maintained at all times thereafter

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das says, swift action has been taken for restructuring of Yes Bank

- Reserve Bank of India Governor **Shaktikanta Das** stated that **swift action** has been taken by the RBI in coordination with **Govt of India** for the restructuring of **Yes Bank**
- The RBI Governor stated that as per the new scheme, Yes Bank moratorium will be lifted and the new board will assume the charge on 26th March. Mr. Das also stated that the credible and sustainable plan of the revival of the yes bank also ensured that the identity of the bank will remain the same.
- The RBI Governor stated that if there is a requirement then RBI will provide the necessary support for Liquidity for Yes Bank.
- Mr. Das informed that the RBI proposed to conduct another six months US Dollar sell/buy swap on March 23 to provide liquidity to markets. He informed that to further improve monetary transmission, RBI will conduct long-term repo operations **LTRO** in multiple tranches up to one lakh crore rupees at policy rate.

Centre to borrow Rs 51,000 crore more from RBI in March 2020

- After reviewing the cash position of the Centre, **the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in consultation with the government raised the borrowing target from short-term securities by **Rs 51,000 crore** during the month.
- This is in line with the Revised Estimate announced by the government in the Budget 2020-21. According to the earlier calendar, the government was to borrow **Rs 24,000 crore** through **treasury bills** of various tenure.

- However, as per the revised calendar, the government will borrow **Rs 75,000 crore** through the treasury bills in **three tranches**.
- According to a statement by the finance ministry, treasury bills worth **Rs 25,000 crore** will be auctioned on **March 18** and similar amounts on March 24 and March 30. The Budget 2020-21 raised the net borrowing to **Rs 4.99 lakh crore** from **Rs 4.48 lakh crore** in the Budget Estimate.

RBI announces US dollar sell/buy swap to provide liquidity to foreign exchange market

- Observing mismatch in **US dollar liquidity** across the world, the Reserve Bank has announced a **six month US dollar sell/buy swap** to provide liquidity to the foreign exchange market. RBI stated, the first swap worth **two billion US dollars** will be conducted.
- RBI has stated that financial markets are facing intense selling pressures due to coronavirus infection. It stated that volatility in global markets has been spiked by a slump in international crude prices and a decline in bond yields in advanced economies.
- RBI assured that it ready to take all necessary measures to ensure that the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the Indian economy are mitigated. RBI added that the level of forex reserves, which stood at 487.24 billion dollars as of 6th March, remains comfortable to meet any exigency.
- All sectoral indices recorded a fall of over five percent with shares of realty, metal, oil and gas, banking and finance sectors suffering maximum selling.

RBI to infuse ₹0,000-cr liquidity via OMO purchase, says financial conditions tightening

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, stated it will conduct **open-market operations (OMO)** entailing purchase of four government securities (G-Secs) aggregating **₹0,000 crore** on March 20 to infuse liquidity in the banking system in the wake of tightening financial conditions and hardening yields.
- When it announced the OMO, the RBI specifically referred to certain financial market segments experiencing a tightening of financial conditions as reflected in the hardening of yields and widening of spreads in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic risks.
- This OMO purchase announcement comes even as the central bank, on March 16, announced that it will conduct additional **Long-Term Repo Operations (LTROs)** to infuse liquidity in the banking system for up to a total amount of **₹1 -lakh crore** at the policy repo rate beginning March 18.
- Meanwhile, at the LTRO conducted for a notified amount of ₹25,000 crore with a three-year tenor, the RBI received 21 bids aggregating ₹27,096 crore. It accepted bids aggregating ₹25,012 crore.

RBI to infuse ₹.05 lakh crore rupee liquidity

- To counterbalance possible domestic liquidity effects of the \$2 billion sell-buy swap operation that it will conduct on **March 16, 2020**, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to provide rupee liquidity for seven days aggregating **₹5,000 crore** to the financial system . This is in addition to the already announced provision of **14-day rupee** liquidity aggregating **₹3.80 lakh crore**.

- The rupee liquidity infusion will be via variable rate 'reverse' repo auctions. The RBI stated it is closely and continuously monitoring the rapidly evolving global situation and will take all necessary measures to ensure that money, debt and forex markets remain adequately liquid and stable, and continue to function normally.
- Simultaneously, the RBI stated it is closely and continuously monitoring the rapidly evolving global situation and spillovers arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- RBI to conduct sell/buy swap for \$2 b to halt rupee's fall, provide dollar liquidity

RBI cuts UCB exposure limits to group of connected borrowers; give one more year to meet enhanced PSL norms

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has cut the prudential exposure limits for **urban co-operative banks (UCBs)** to a group of connected borrowers. It also gave these banks **one more year** to meet the enhanced priority sector lending (PSL) norms.
- The RBI stated henceforth, the prudential exposure limits for UCBs to a group of connected borrowers/parties will be **25 per cent** (40 per cent), respectively, of their tier-I capital.
- The prudential exposure limits for single borrower/party have been retained at 15 per cent of UCBs tier-I capital. The December 2019 draft circular on “ Limits on Exposure to Single and Group Borrowers/Parties and Large Exposures and Revision in Priority Sector Lending Targets for UCBs” had proposed this exposure limit at 10 per cent.
- The revised exposure limits will apply to all types of fresh exposures taken by UCBs. The RBI stated UCBs have to bring down their existing exposures which are more than the revised limits to within the aforesaid revised limits by **March 31, 2023**.
- UCBs shall have at least **50 per cent** of their aggregate loans and advances comprising loans of not more than ₹25 lakh or 0.2 per cent of their Tier I capital, whichever is higher, subject to a maximum of Rs.1 crore, per borrower/party.
- UCBs have been given time up to **March 31, 2024** to reach the PSL target of **75 per cent** of loans against **March 31, 2023** proposed in the draft circular.
- They are required to reach this PSL target in four phases -- **45 per cent** of loans by March-end **2021**; 50 per cent of loans by March-end 2022; 60 per cent of loans by March-end 2023; and 75 per cent of loans by March-end 2024. Currently, the overall PSL target for UCBs is at 40 per cent of loans.

Policy Rates:

Parameter	Percentage
Repo Rate	4.4%
Reverse Repo Rate	4%
Marginal Standing Facility Rate	4.65%
Bank Rate	4.65%
Cash Reserve Ratio	3%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio	18.25%

SBI

SBI cuts marginal cost of lending rate by up to 15 points across tenors

- State Bank of India (SBI) stated it has reduced its **marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR)** by up to 15 basis points across various tenors, effective March 10.
- SBI stated that the bank has reduced its one-year MCLR by **10 basis points to 7.75 per cent** from **7.85 per cent** earlier. This is 10th consecutive cut in MCLR by the bank in the current fiscal. Overnight and one-month MCLR have been reduced by 15 basis points to 7.45 per cent each. Three-month MCLR has been revised to 7.50 per cent from 7.65 per cent.
- The new two-year and three-year MCLR stand reduced by 10 basis points to 7.95 per cent and 8.05 per cent, respectively. Another state-run lender Union Bank of India had announced cut in its MCLR by 10 basis points across all tenors, effective March 11.

SBI raises \$100 million via green bonds

- **State Bank of India** stated it has raised **USD 100 million green bonds**, the first such bond by any state-owned bank in this fiscal. The bonds were priced at **3M Libor + 80 basis points**. The lender has already two climate bond initiative certified green bonds issuances, aggregating **USD 700 million**.
- It is an extremely important transaction for the country especially in this critical situation. We believe this issuance will reassure confidence in the country's strength in the international bond market, the bank's chairman Rajnish Kumar stated in a statement.
- The bank has adopted the green bond framework with an objective to create a positive impact on the environment and this transaction is yet another step as part of sustainability journey, he added.
- The bonds will be issued through SBI's London branch on March 31, 2020 and will be listed on Singapore SGX.

Loans and EMIs to be cheaper as SBI to cut repo rate by 75 basis points

- **State Bank of India, SBI** stated that it has decided to pass on the entire **75 basis points repo rate** cut announced by the Reserve Bank of India.
- The new rates, to be effective from **1st of April**, will be applicable for its borrowers availing loans based on External Benchmark-linked lending rate, EBR and Repo-Linked Lending Rate, RLLR.
- The bank stated in a statement that equated-monthly installments on eligible home loan accounts, linked to EBR or RLLR will get cheaper by around **52 rupees per one lakh rupees on a 30-year loan**

SBI commits 0.25% of FY20 annual profit to help fight COVID-19

- **State Bank of India** stated it will provide **0.25 per cent** of its annual profit for 2019-20 to fight the coronavirus outbreak in India. The announcement came hours after the government notified spending by companies to deal with the coronavirus outbreak as **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** activity under the companies law.
- The fund used to fight the coronavirus pandemic will be spent from **CSR funds**, SBI stated in a statement.
- This is in line with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs' notification of spending CSR funds for COVID-19 as an eligible CSR activity. it stated.

- Companies' expenditure to deal with the coronavirus outbreak will be considered as CSR activities.
- The bank will use this fund for various activities related to COVID-19 mainly to support health care for underprivileged people in cooperation with healthcare professionals and industry, it stated.

SBI opens emergency credit line to meet any liquidity mismatch for its borrowers

- **State Bank of India** has opened an **emergency credit line** to meet any liquidity mismatch for its borrowers.
- The additional liquidity facility **Covid-19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL)**, will provide funds up to **200 crore** rupees and will be available till June 30, SBI stated in a circular.
- The loan will be offered at an interest rate of **7.25 per cent** with a tenure of **12 months**. Borrowers can avail maximum 10 per cent of the existing fund based working capital limits, subject to a cap of **200 crore rupees**

State Bank of India to buy shares worth 7,250 crore rupees of cash-strapped Yes Bank

- The **State Bank of India** stated that it will buy shares worth **7,250 crore rupees** of the cash-strapped Yes Bank in accordance with the draft reconstruction scheme envisaged by the Reserve Bank of India.
- SBI stated, its board has permitted the purchase of the private lender's shares at a price of 10 rupees per share subject to all regulatory approvals. SBI's shareholding in Yes Bank will remain within **49 percent** of the paid-up capital.
- According to RBI's reconstruction scheme, the strategic investor was not only supposed to pick up 49 percent stake but assure that the holding will not fall below 26 percent for a minimum period of three years from the date of capital infusion.
- The scheme was announced a day after RBI imposed a moratorium on the Yes Bank, restricting withdrawals to **50,000 rupees** till the 3rd of April, while also superseding the bank's board.

SBI scraps minimum monthly balance requirement

- State Bank of India (SBI) has decided to do away with the maintenance of **Average Monthly Balance (AMB)** for all savings bank (SB) accounts and cut the interest rate on these accounts to 3 per cent from 3.25 per cent. Further, it has waived SMS charges levied on a quarterly basis.
- India's largest bank seems to have done a fine balancing act in waiving AMB and SMS charges and at the same time cutting the **SB interest rate**. This move by SBI will prompt other banks to follow suit.
- With the cut in SB interest rates, account holders with balances up to **₹ lakh** (interest rate so far: 3.25 per cent) and above ₹1 lakh will earn a flat **3 per cent**.
- Currently, SB customers need to maintain an AMB of ₹3000, ₹2000 and ₹1000 in metro, semi-urban and rural areas, respectively. The bank used to levy a penalty of ₹5 to ₹15 plus taxes on non-maintenance of the AMB.

BSNL, SBI partner to launch UPI-based payment platform Bharat InstaPay

- State-owned **BSNL** in partnership with **State Bank of India** launched a **UPI-based payment platform, Bharat InstaPay**.
- According to BSNL officials, the new payment facility developed by the company will enable its partners, especially prepaid sellers, to buy service immediately for sale.

- This digital payment platform is an initiative of BSNL powered by SBI, which shall enable all types of channel partners of BSNL for doing all their payment transactions digitally on a **24-by-7 basis**.
- Before this service, BSNL vendors had to wait for payment settlement to buy various telecom services that they sold in market. This used to get further delayed on non-working days.
- BSNL stated Bharat InstaPay will help its partners do **digital transactions** on a **real-time basis**.

ADB

ADB to give USD 200 million to companies manufacturing products to combat coronavirus

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** stated it will provide **USD 200 million (about Rs 1,480 crore)** to companies manufacturing and distributing medicines, and other items needed to combat the novel coronavirus (**COVID-19**).
- The funds will be made available through ADB's Supply Chain Finance Program and provided to selected companies within weeks, the Manila-headquartered multilateral funding agency stated in a release.
- The support from ADB, working in partnership with commercial banks, will provide such companies in Asia and the Pacific with additional **working capital** to meet expansion and other requirements.

ADB to invest \$100 million into NIIF's Fund of Funds

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** will invest **\$100 million** equivalent into the **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) of India's Fund of Funds**. With this investment the NIIF platform has now secured \$700 million in commitments. **Government of India** and **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank** are the other investors in the fund.
- With this capital infusion, the FoF will be able to increase its support to India-focused PE fund managers at a time when their global fundraising prospects may be challenging in the short term.
- NIIF Fund of Funds (FoF) was established in 2018 with the objective of creating a vehicle to provide India-focused private equity fund managers with a go-to institutional investor operating at scale and based in India.
- The FoF invests into a variety of sectors and strategies through third-party managed funds. So far, it has made commitments to three funds aggregating to over ₹2,600 crores (\$350 million equivalent).
- The three Funds are focused on a wide range of sectors, including green energy and climate; middle-income and affordable housing; and entrepreneur-driven mid-market growth companies operating across diversified sectors. Additionally, the managers of the three funds have successfully raised **\$1.1 billion** equivalent alongside NIIF's investments.

ADB announces \$6.5 bn package for developing member countries

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** announced a **\$6.5 billion** package for its developing member countries to fight the coronavirus pandemic.
- The initial package has been announced to address the immediate needs of developing member countries (DMCs) as they respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, ADB stated in a statement.
- **Manila-headquartered ADB** works towards sustainable development and poverty eradication in Asia and the Pacific region.

- ADB will further strengthen its close collaboration with the **International Monetary Fund**, the **World Bank**, regional development banks, the **World Health Organization** and major bilateral funding agencies, including the **Japan International Cooperation Agency**.
- It will also include the US Centers for Disease Control and private sector organisations, to ensure effective implementation of its COVID-19 response.
- ADB stated it will seek adjustment in its financing instruments and business processes to provide the support package for its developing member countries (DMCs) as quickly and flexibly as possible.
- This initial package of \$6.5 billion includes around \$3.6 billion in sovereign operations for a range of responses to the health and economic consequences of the pandemic and \$1.6 billion in non-sovereign operations for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, domestic and regional trade, and firms that are directly impacted.
- ADB stated it will also mobilise about \$1 billion in concessional resources through reallocations from ongoing projects and assessing possible needs for contingencies.
- ADB will make available **USD 40 million** in technical assistance and quick-disbursing grants it added.
- Since its first response to the COVID-19 situation on February 7, ADB already provided more than \$225 million to meet urgent needs of both governments and businesses in DMCs

World Bank

World Bank to provide USD 80 mn to improve water management in HP

- The **World Bank** will provide **USD 80 million (about Rs 600 crore)** loan to improve **water management** practices and increase agricultural productivity in selected gram panchayats or village councils in **Himachal Pradesh**.
- An agreement in this regard was signed between the Government of India, **Government of Himachal Pradesh** and the World Bank.
- The Integrated Project for Source Sustainability and Climate Resilient Rain-Fed Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh will be implemented in 428 gram panchayats in 10 districts benefiting over 4 lakh smallholder farmers, women and pastoral communities, stated the finance ministry statement.
- The project will improve upstream water sources in forests, pastures and grasslands and ensure sufficient water is available for sustainable agriculture both in Himachal Pradesh and in downstream states, the ministry stated.
- The USD 80-million loan has a final maturity of 14.5 years including a grace period of five years.

India to seek \$70 million from World Bank for waterway connectivity grid in East

- The **World Bank** may provide a grant to develop India's under-utilised network of rivers and canals as an alternative mode of transport.
- The Shipping Ministry has stated it will seek a technical assistance grant of **\$70 million** from the World Bank to build a transport connectivity grid linking waterways in the eastern region with its South Asian neighbours.
- The **Eastern Waterways Connectivity Transport Grid (EWaCTG)** project aims to provide seamless connectivity between National Waterway-1 (NW-1) and NW-2 through the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) routes, and develop

an economic corridor of 4,200 km of waterways and coastal shipping for Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the North-Eastern States.

- **EWaCTG** seeking technical assistance of **\$70 million** from the World Bank was appraised and recommended for approval by the screening committee of the Department of Economic Affairs during a meeting on February 18
- Developing a water grid was one of the Budget announcements of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in 2019

Other Banking News

Bank of England cuts rates to 0.25 per cent

- The Bank of England unexpectedly cut interest rates by half a per cent in a shock move to bolster Britain's economy against disruption caused by the coronavirus outbreak.
- Members of the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee voted to cut Bank Rate for the first time since August 2016, to **0.25 per cent from 0.75 per cent**, the central bank stated in a statement.
- The BoE maintained its target for government bond purchases to **435 billion pounds** and its corporate bond purchase target to **10 billion pounds**.
- The BoE also introduced a new term funding scheme for small businesses. It will offer **four-year funding** over the **next 12 months**.
- The central bank's Financial Policy Committee also lowered the counter-cyclical capital buffer for banks to zero from 1 per cent.

IDBI Bank offers uniform three-month moratorium to all borrowers

- **IDBI Bank** has stated it will offer a uniform **three-month moratorium** on standard term loan repayments to all its borrowers.
- Within 24 hours of an RBI announcement in this regard, the bank started sending out SMSes to borrowers informing them that it is "pleased to grant three moratorium on three instalments of your loan account up to May 31, 2020."
- Wherever the March 2020 instalment has already been paid by the borrower, the relief would be applicable for EMIs payable in April and May. The borrower is not required to make a separate request.
- Interest shall continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the loan during the moratorium period and will be added in the loan amount outstanding, which might result in a marginal increase in EMI. It is, however, not clear whether the moratorium is applicable to credit card dues or not.
- To ease the EMI pressure on scores of borrowers amid the pandemic, the RBI permitted all commercial banks and NBFCs to grant a three-month moratorium on instalment payments on all term loans outstanding as on March 1, 2020.
- If any borrower wishes to make an EMI payment during the moratorium period, it can be remitted to the loan account as pre-payment and the same will be adjusted against the principal amount of the loan. This will attract no pre-payment charge.

IRDAI bans capital gearing treaties by insurers

- **The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has asked insurers not to enter into any **capital gearing treaties** with immediate effect.
- Capital gearing refers to the amount of debt a company has relative to its equity. Companies with high capital gearing will have a large amount of debt relative to their equity.
- It has been observed that some of the insurers have entered into capital gearing treaties in various forms, including Quota Share Reinsurance Treaty. The Authority is of the view that such capital gearing treaties are of the nature of financial arrangements and not primarily a risk-transfer mechanism, **Pravin Kutumbe**, Member – F&I, IRDAI, stated in a communication to insurers.
- Stating that the insurers had adopted these arrangements in order to improve the solvency ratio, the regulator stated: “No insurer should enter into any fresh capital gearing treaties.”
- Those insurers who are having such treaties on their books should submit a board-approved action plan for phasing out the treaties along with time lines to the Authority on or before June 30, 2020, in such a manner that solvency norms as required are adhered to.

ICICI Lombard, BharatPe launch COVID-19 insurance cover for shopkeepers

- With shops **selling essential goods** and **medicines open** during the national lockdown, **BharatPe** and **ICICI Lombard General Insurance** have launched a special insurance scheme for shopkeepers.
- This policy on a diagnosis of Covid-19 (+ve) will pay 100 per cent of the sum insured, irrespective of hospitalisation expenses, ICICI Lombard stated in a statement.
- Called the **Covid-19 Protection Insurance Cover**, the premium starts at Rs 199 and provides a sum insured of Rs25,000. Value-added benefits such as Health Assistance and CHAT/Virtual assistance, tele-consultation and ambulance assistance are also a part of the offering. It provides coverage across the age group of **18-65 years**.
- The new product is a step forward in BharatPe’s endeavour in introducing industry-first initiatives for shopkeepers. It is also a **‘first of its kind’** sachet product by ICICI Lombard that will cover merchants, the release further stated.
- Shopkeepers will get 100 per cent of the opted sum insured as a lumpsum in the event of the first diagnosis itself. The insurance is available on the **BharatPe app** and we hope to cover lakhs of our merchants digitally over next few days, stated Ashneer Grover, CEO and Co-Founder, BharatPe.

SIDBI to provide loans up to Rs 50 lakh to MSEs manufacturing medical supplies to fight COVID-19

- **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** stated it will provide loans up to Rs **50 lakh** to **micro and small enterprises (MSEs)** that are manufacturing medical supplies for fighting the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The **Sidbi Assistance to Facilitate Emergency (SAFE)** response against coronavirus scheme will offer loans to MSEs at a fixed interest rate of **5 per cent** and with a maximum loan repayment tenure of **five years**.
- MSEs engaged in manufacturing of hand sanitizers, masks, gloves, head gear, body suits, shoe-covers, ventilators, goggles and testing labs are eligible for loans under this scheme.
- The special scheme will help MSEs to acquire equipment, plant and machinery, other assets including raw materials required for production or delivery of services.

- It will also help meet additional emergencies to ramp-up supplies of these essential products.
- The loans offered are collateral-free and will be sanctioned **within 48 hours** of applying and submission of documents. MSEs can apply online for availing loans under the scheme, Sidbi stated.

Andhra Bank opens Covid-19 emergency credit line

- **Andhra Bank** has opened an **emergency credit line** by launching a new short-term loan facility. The **Covid-19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL)** is being offered to **agriculture, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** and corporates to meet temporary liquidity mismatches.
- The scheme is aimed at providing assistance to the industry segment whose business operations have been affected due to stress in supply chains, decreased demand for the product, delayed realisations of the receivables, lockdown of the units, non-availability of labour and raw materials due to Covid-19, Andhra Bank stated.
- The details of the scheme and other modalities can be obtained from the bank branches.

Indian Bank announces special emergency loan schemes to address lockdown

- **Indian Bank** announced **five special emergency loan schemes** for customs to cushion effect of economic slump and lockdown. It will be the second bank after State Bank of India (SBI) to come out with such schemes.
- State-run Indian Bank has announced an **additional funding facility for large corporates (MSME)**, retail customers, pensioners and self-help groups (SHGs) in the wake of COVID 19.
- The bank stated that **IND-COVID Emergency Credit Line** will provide additional funding of up to 10 per cent of the working capital limits both fund based and non-fund based limits with a maximum limit of **100 crore rupees**.
- The loan tenor will be for 36 months with an initial moratorium of up to six months and would carry fixed interest rate of 1-year Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate.
- The second scheme, **IND- MSE COVID Emergency Loan— (INDMSE-CEL)** will give additional funding of 10 per cent of FBWClimits with maximum Rs 50 lakh, available for all Micro and Small Enterprises and upto 60 months tenor.
- Indian Bank has launched the **SHG-COVID - SAHAYA LOAN** . Under this each member can avail a soft loan of Rs. 5000 I.e., Rs. 1 lakh per SHG. The loan is for 36 months with 6 months moratorium
- **IND-COVID Emergency Salary Loan:** to salaried employees upto an amount equal to 20 times latest monthly gross salary subject to maximum of Rs 2 lakh. This is to meet urgent medical and other expenditure. Concessional interest and all charges waived
- **IND COVID- Emergency Pension Loan:** 15 times monthly pension subject to maximum of Rs 2 lakh, with 60 months repayment. Concessional interest and all charges waived.

Centre approves Rs 1,340 crore to recapitalise Regional Rural Banks for next financial year

- The Central government approved **Rs 1,340 crore recapitalisation plan** to help the **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** meet **regulatory capital requirements** for the next financial year, so that they continue to provide credit to farmers, small scale industries, rural artisans and entrepreneurs hit by the coronavirus outbreak.
- RRBs primarily cater to the credit and banking requirements of agriculture sector and rural areas with a focus on small and marginal farmers, micro and small enterprises, rural artisans and weaker sections of the society.

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines prescribes that the RRBs have to provide 75 per cent of their total credit under priority sector lending. The capital will be used for those RRBs that are unable to maintain minimum Capital to Risk weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of **9 per cent**, as per the regulatory norms prescribed by the Reserve Bank.
- As per the law, the Centre holds 50 per cent stake in Regional Rural Banks, while 35 per cent and 15 per cent shares are with the concerned sponsor banks and state governments respectively.
- The Cabinet has also approved extension of scheme for Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies on Export of Garments and Made-ups from April 1 onwards till the scheme is merged with Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products. This will give some relief to the exporters, who are badly hit by the coronavirus outbreak.

Centre to share 50 per cent burden

- Rs 1.340 crore approved to help RRBs meet regulatory capital requirements next fiscal
- Rs 670 crore approved as the Centre's share for the RRB recapitalisation scheme

Canara Bank offers credit support to MSMEs, corporates, agri, business entities & retail borrowers to tide over Covid-19

- Public sector **Canara Bank** has launched a new loan scheme – **Canara Credit Support** – with immediate effect to support its customers to tide over the liquidity/ cash flow mismatches in the wake of disruption in business operations due to the outbreak of Covid-19.
- Under the new scheme '**Canara Credit Support-Covid-19**', MSMEs, corporates, agri, business entities and retail borrowers are eligible to avail from **10 per cent to 35 per cent** of their existing working capital or loan limit depending upon category of borrowers on softer terms up to June 30. No additional security is required for the stated facility.
- The release further stated they have as always come to the forefront to extend its support to its customers. Canara Bank has already announced waiver of charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance in SB accounts and waiver of ATM charges for using other bank ATMs for cash withdrawals, etc up to June 30.

Jana SFB launches UPI QR-based loan instalment payment facility

- **Jana Small Finance Bank**, along with **National Payment Corporation of India**, has launched a **UPI QR-based loan installment payment facility** for its customers. The move comes at a time when banks are advising their customers to operate maximum banking services from the safe confines of their home.
- However, Ajay Kanwal, Managing Director and CEO, Jana SFB stated that the bank had been working on the facility for some time to introduce a cost efficient and easy means of loan repayment.
- While the facility is currently available for the over 40 lakh Jana SFB customers, the lender plans to offer it to other micro finance agencies too.
- There are about **five crore micro finance** customers would be paying back about **Rs 5000crore** of cash on a monthly basis. If we can digitise that it will be a big saving, Kanwal noted.

Insurance, health tech companies announce policies to cover COVID-19

- With the number of coronavirus (Covid-19) patients in India rising exponentially, several health, insurance and banking institutions are offering special policies that provide free medical cover to those who have been tested positive.

- While the sector regulator **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has mandated the insurance companies to cover hospitalisation and quarantine for the Covid-19 patients, a majority of these policies entail that the diseases declared as pandemic by the World Health Organisation would be excluded, which leaves the customers in the lurch.
- Under the IRDAI's sandbox initiative, many companies have either redesigned their health policies or introduced separate Covid-19 cover packages. **Bajaj Allianz Life**, for instance, introduced a first-of-its-kind **Artificial Intelligence-enabled chatbot** and live chat-integrated WhatsApp service for its customers who want to buy or stay updated about the policies from the service provider.
- **ICICI Lombard**, a non-life insurance company, announced a special package for its customers who test positive for Covid-19 at any government health facility. The company will pay 100 per cent of the sum insured irrespective of the hospitalisation expenses. The health cover is priced at a premium of RS 149 and provides a sum insured of Rs 25,000, including services such as health assistance, chat or virtual assistance, tele-consultation and ambulance assistance, as part of the offerings.
- **Clinikk Healthcare**, a health tech firm, stated that it is offering a Covid-19 protection cover of up to Rs 1 lakh, including free online medical consultations to all those who buy its package of Rs 499.
- The company stated that it will also tie up with various corporate and businesses for special employee packages that cover Covid-19 cases. **Start Health Insurance**, a standalone health insurer, also announced its coronavirus policy available under two sum insured options: Rs 21,000 at premium of Rs 459 plus GST and Rs 42,000 at premium of `918 plus GST.

KVB launches prepaid wallet card in Karur

- **KarurVysya Bank** has launched '**Enkasu**', a **pre-paid card** in **Karur**. In response to the digital initiative of Government of India, the bank undertook '**Quit Cash Movement**' in Karur – a movement to reduce the usage of cash in the district of Karur.
- In order to solve this problem, KarurVysya Bank has introduced Enkasu card. Enkasu works on Near-Field Communication (NFC) technology in a semi closed loop. The cardholder can make '**tap & go**' payments for even small purchases to merchants for as little as Re 1. Doing away with the need for cash and small change, Enkasu card will be beneficial to both merchants and customers alike. In addition, Enkasu cards are unique in that they can be accepted 'online' as well as 'offline' thereby, increasing its utility manifold as internet access is not mandatory for its usage

IRDAI sets up panel on governance at insurers

- The country's insurance regulator has set up a **16-member committee** to find ways to improve corporate governance systems of insurers, primarily on making key functions such as risk management and internal audits independent of each other
- The Insurance Regulation and Development Authority (IRDAI) stated that a peer review of its current guidelines on corporate governance "indicated that there is need to further strengthen the guidelines".

- The committee will be headed by **PravinKutumbe**, member-finance and investment at IRDAI and has six other members from the insurance regulator besides members from the Reserve Bank of India and the Securities and Exchange Board of India along with other industry participants. It has been asked to submit the report to IRDAI in **three months**.

RBI to inject Rs 30,000 cr liquidity into market

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** will inject liquidity of **Rs 30,000 crore** through open market operations to maintain financial stability in the system in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak
- The Central Bank stated that it will conduct the operation in two tranches of **Rs 15,000 crore** each in March. It stated that the auctions would be conducted on March 24 and March 30. It also stated that with the COVID-19 related dislocations, stress in certain financial market segments is still severe and financial conditions remain tight.
- It added that its endeavour is to ensure that all markets segments function normally with adequate liquidity and turnover. The central bank had already infused Rs 10,000 crore through open market operations

SIDBI to start Swavalamban Express on Jun 5 for budding entrepreneurs

- **The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** on stated it will start **Swavalamban Express** on June 5 this year for budding entrepreneurs.
- The principal financial institution engaged in promotion, financing and development of **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** stated the decision to start the train was taken based on the feedback received from various stakeholders.
- "The Swavalamban Express will start from June 5 and will travel to 11 enterprising cities starting from Lucknow and thereafter to Jammu, Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata and finally to Varanasi in a span of 15 days covering 7,000 km," it stated in a statement.
- "The Swavalamban Express train is a part of our umbrella mission Swavalamban which aims to induce entrepreneurship culture amongst youth. It's an aspirational journey powered by inspirational India," SIDBI Chairman and MD Mohammad Mustafa stated.
- Swavalamban Express is aimed towards enhancing the knowledge of participants about financial and non-financial aspects of enterprise running.
- This will be done through experts and mentors boarding the train in between, interaction with role models, brain storming and group discussions.
- SIDBI expects 500 youths to be a part of this journey, Mustafa stated

ICICI Lombard launches a dedicated insurance cover for coronavirus

- Private sector non-life insurance company **ICICI Lombard** has launched a focused policy for **coronavirus (COVID-19)**, which will pay the entire sum insured irrespective of hospitalisation expenses.
- If a policyholder tests positive for COVID-19 at any of the Government-authorized centres, the company will pay out the entire sum insured, in a lump sum in the event of a first diagnosis of COVID-19 during the policy period, subject to an initial waiting period of 14 days, the company stated in a regulatory filing.

- The scope of the cover shall be within the geographical boundaries of India and restricted to Indian nationals only, it stated, adding the policy has been launched in group insurance mode.
- The health cover comes with a premium of **Rs.149** and provides a sum insured of **Rs.25,000**

YES Bank gets Rs 60k-cr line of credit from RBI to resume operations

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has extended a credit line of **Rs 60,000 crore** to **YES Bank** to ensure that the bank is able to meet its obligations to depositors as it resumed its full-service operations, according to sources familiar with the development.
- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had stated the regulator was ready to offer liquidity if required.
- However, this is a case of the RBI being the “**lender of the last resort**”, and, in accordance with the terms of the arrangement, the bank will have to use its immediate liquid assets before it can touch the credit line, sources stated. This is perhaps for the first time that the RBI has come with such an arrangement

ECB launches €750 billion ‘pandemic emergency’ bond-buying scheme

- The **European Central Bank** announced a surprise **750-billion-euro** scheme to purchase government and corporate bonds, as it joined other central banks in stepping up efforts to contain the economic damage from the coronavirus.
- The so-called Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme comes just six days after the ECB unveiled a big-bank stimulus package that failed to calm nervous markets, piling pressure on the bank to open the financial floodgates.
- The USD **820-billion** asset purchasing scheme will be temporary and be concluded once the bank “judges that the coronavirus Covid-19 crisis phase is over, but in any case not before the end of the year”, it stated in a statement.
- The decision came after the bank’s 25-member governing council held emergency talks by phone late into the evening.
- The governing council will do everything necessary within its mandate, it stated, adding that the size of the asset purchases could be increased if needed.

Nabard pegs Karnataka’s credit potential at ₹.44 lakh cr for fiscal 2020-21

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard)** has projected a credit potential of **₹,44,56,428.64 crore** for financial year 2020-21 for **Karnataka**.
- In the State Focus Paper (SFP), submitted to Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa , it has pegged the total credit potential at ₹1,45,79,750.50 crore for agriculture.
- “The credit potential for agriculture includes main components such as: crop loan ₹85,21,102.90 crore, water resources ₹4,57,241.11 crore, plantation and horticulture ₹8,92,340.11 crore and for dairy development ₹5,65,664.10 crore,” stated PVS Suryakumar, Chief General Manager, Karnataka-RO, Nabard.
- Talking on Farmer Producers Organisations, he stated in Karnataka there are more than 400 FPOs promoted by various agencies. Nabard has promoted 242 FPOs in the State.
- Nabard has also provided refinance assistance to banks in Karnataka for both Short-Term Crop Loan and Long-Term Loans amounting to ₹81,451 crore during the last five years.
- For infrastructure development in rural areas in Karnataka, Nabard has provided an assistance of **₹4,150 crore**

DBS Bank, Bharti AXA join hands for insurance plan covering coronavirus

- **DBS Bank** India stated it has tied-up with **Bharti AXA** to roll out a complimentary insurance plan covering all medical conditions, including **COVID-19**. The plan would cover all medical conditions, including COVID-19, and up to 10 days of hospitalisation, with a cover of Rs 5,000 per day, for a 30-day period.
- Additionally, all DBS customers can purchase health insurance products that are currently offered on the **digibank app** through their general insurance partners.
- This includes guarantee of payments for hassle-free hospitalization and arrangement of emergency medical evacuation for NRIs with dependents in the country. It is also offering an Emergency Global Medical Assist Program that provides 24x7 access to medical support

Indian Bank board approves share swap for Allahabad Bank merger

- **Indian Bank** will issue **115 shares** for every **1,000 shares** of **Allahabad Bank** for merging the latter with itself.
- In a separate filing, Union Bank stated it has set March 23, 2020, as the record date for issuing and allotting equity shares of Union Bank of India to the shareholders of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.
- In the biggest consolidation exercise in the banking space, the government in August 2019 had announced four mega mergers of public sector banks, bringing down their total number to **12** from **27** in 2017, a move aimed at making state-owned lenders global sized banks.
- As per this plan, **United Bank of India** and **Oriental Bank of Commerce** will be merged with **Punjab National Bank**; **Syndicate Bank** will be merged with **Canara Bank**; **Allahabad Bank** will be amalgamated with **Indian Bank**; and **Andhra Bank** and **Corporation Bank** will be consolidated with **Union Bank of India**.
- Last year, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank were merged with Bank of Baroda. Prior to this, the government had merged five associate banks of SBI and Bharatiya Mahila Bank with the State Bank of India

IDFC First Bank to invest ₹250 cr in Yes Bank

- IDFC First Bank will make an equity investment of ₹250 crore in beleaguered Yes Bank to acquire 25 crore equity shares.
- Federal Bank had committed to investing ₹300 crore in Yes Bank for subscription of its 30 crore shares.
- The Centre notified the YES Bank Limited Reconstruction Scheme, 2020, a day after the Union Cabinet approved a reconstruction plan proposed by the RBI for bailing out fund-starved Yes Bank.
- The authorised capital of Yes Bank has been increased to ₹6,200 crore

ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra, Axis join SBI for YES Bank stake

- The final reconstruction scheme for the crisis-ridden YES Bank got Cabinet nod . The rescue plan, as proposed by the RBI, envisages State Bank of India (SBI) picking up **49 per cent stake** in the troubled private lender.
- Meanwhile, in separate filings with the bourses, **ICICI Bank**, **Axis Bank** and **Kotak Mahindra Bank** stated they would be investing in **YES Bank**. While ICICI Bank will pump in **₹1,000 crore** by picking up 100 crore shares at ₹10 each, **Axis Bank** proposes to invest **₹600 crore** (60 crore shares of ₹2 each at a premium of ₹8). **Kotak Mahindra Bank** will

invest **₹500 crore** by acquiring 50 crore equity shares at ₹10 per share. On its part, Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) will infuse ₹1,000 crore.

- The board of SBI, had approved investment of **₹,250 crore in YES Bank**. Already, LIC, a promoter of Axis Bank, owns 8.06 per cent in YES Bank.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that the moratorium — which placed a ₹50,000 withdrawal limit on YES Bank depositors — will be lifted on the third working day (at 1800 hrs) from the date of the notification of the approved scheme.
- Within seven days, a new Board of YES Bank will be constituted and two nominees of SBI will be part of the reconstructed YES Bank as directors. The administrator will vacate office after seven days from the cessation of the moratorium and a new Board will be constituted.
- SBI's investments will have a **three-year lock-in** for **26 per cent** of the 49 per cent stake it will hold. For the other private investors, there will be a three-year lock-in, but for 75 per cent of their investments, she stated.
- YES Bank's authorised capital will be raised from **₹,100 crore** to **₹,200 crore** to accommodate immediate and subsequent capital raise, she stated, adding that the details will be worked out soon.

Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance launches iSelect+ Term Plan

- **Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance Company Limited** announced the launch of **iSelect+ Term Plan** to provide enhanced protection cover at an affordable premium. The plan is available online.
- With the help of iSelect+ Term Plan, subscribers can design their **own financial safety net** to protect their family's future and ensure that they lead their lives comfortably without any financial worries.
- This plan is designed to provide death benefit and terminal illness, and has additional options of accidental death benefit, accidental total and permanent disability benefit and child support benefit, the company stated, while adding that the customers can choose from the various options provided and customize it as per their requirement.

India Post to launch free digital locker service

- Department of Posts is introducing a **free digital parcel locker service** in the city to enable customers collect their consignment from specified post offices at their convenience. The facility will be available in two post offices -- **the Nabadiganta IT Post Office** in Sector 5 of Salt Lake City and another in **New Town**.
- This is for the first time that the **digital parcel locker service** will be introduced in India keeping in mind the benefit of the common man. This facility has been chosen for working people who cannot receive parcels.
- A customer will be given a specific locker number as the address where India Post will drop the parcel.

EPFO lowers interest rate on deposits to 8.5 pc for 2019-20

- Retirement fund body, **Employees' Provident Fund Organization, (EPFO)** lowered the interest rate on provident fund deposits to **8.5 per cent** for the current financial year.
- Earlier it was **8.65 percent**.

PhonePe switches to ICICI for UPI, @ybl handles to continue working

- PhonePe that was solely using Yes Bank's services worked overnight with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and ICICI bank to ensure all its services were up and running within a day.
- PhonePe, with close to 20 crore users, saw an extended service outage, which started immediately after the RBI moratorium on Yes Bank on March 5, lasting for nearly 24 hours.
- The company worked with the NPCI and ICICI bank, its new UPI partner.
- All merchant payment settlements were restored by Friday noon and all consumer wallet, credit and debit card payments were restored by 3 pm, the company said in a statement.
- All UPI services were restored by Friday night, with PhonePe users continuing to use their UPI @ybl handles.

Yes Bank withdrawal limit capped at Rs 50000

- The government restricted withdrawal from capital starved Yes Bank at ₹50,000 in the next one month. This restriction, which came into effect from March 05, 6 pm, will remain in place April 3, 2020.
- Yes Bank cannot make in aggregate, payment to a depositor of a sum exceeding Rs. 50,000 lying to his credit, in any savings, current or any other deposit account till April 3rd.
- The RBI however said it may allow payment of over ₹50,000 to Yes Bank depositors an amount in excess of Rs. 50,000 like expenses for medical treatment, marriage and education.

NPCI doubles UPI transaction limit to Rs 2 lakh for some payments

- The National Payments Corporation of India or NPCI, the umbrella organization for retail payments systems, has doubled the per transaction payment limit for Unified Payments Interface or UPI to Rs 2 lakh for some payments.
- The committee has approved to increase the current limit of Rs 1 lakh per transaction to Rs 2 lakh. This is to fulfill specific needs, including payments for credit cards, loans, insurance, and mutual fund investments.
- The move will be effective from April 2020 and would boost the transactions for categories such as AMC, B2B collections, mutual funds, insurance, pre-approved disbursements, and credit card payments

ICICI Prudential AMC ties up Saraswat Co-op Bank to tap rural potential

- **ICICI Prudential AMC** has tied up with **Saraswat Co-operative Bank**, the largest in the urban co-operative banking space in India, to distribute its products with the bank's customers.
- The tie-up Saraswat Co-operative Bank will offer investment products of ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund to its customers, through its 280 branches, spread across six States.
- ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund through this tie-up aims to increase its footprint, especially in smaller towns and cities and leverage on the bank's over 100-year of presence in the country.
- Nimesh Shah, Managing Director and CEO, ICICI Prudential AMC, stated Saraswat Co-operative Bank customers will have a wider choice of financial products that may bring them closer to achieve their financial goals.

IRDAI asks insurance companies to design policies to cover coronavirus

- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India**, IRDAI has asked insurers to expeditiously settle hospitalisation claims related to **novel coronavirus disease** under health policies.

- The Regulator has instructed insurance companies to come out with policies to cover treatment costs for coronavirus infection.
- It stated, the costs of admissible medical expenses during the course of treatment including quarantine period, should be settled in accordance to the applicable terms and conditions. All the claims reported under **COVID-19** will be thoroughly reviewed by review committee before repudiating the claims.

NABARD infuses Rs 1.46 lakh cr in rural banking system during current fiscal

- **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** has infused **1.46 lakh crore rupees** in the **rural banking system** during the current fiscal.
- NABARD has stated that **66,397 crore rupees** have been given in **short-term credit** and **6,704 crore rupees** in **long-term credit** to **rural cooperative banks**. Regional rural banks have availed 14,141 crore rupees in short-term credit and 8,417 crore rupees in long-term credit. In addition, other banks, including small finance banks, have obtained long-term refinance of 37,895 crore rupees.
- While short-term refinance is essentially production credit, long-term refinance is aimed at supporting sectors like dairy, poultry, fishery, farm mechanisation, irrigation, and non-farm sectors, among others.

Govt introduces bill to amend banking laws to strengthen cooperative banks

- The Government introduced a bill in Lok Sabha which seeks to protect the interest of **small depositors** by bringing **cooperative banks** under the RBI regulations.
- Introducing the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated the bill is the “**need of the hour**” to avoid a PMC Bank-like crisis in the future. Noting that the happenings at the PMC Bank had “unfortunately” put a lot of small depositors in difficulty, the Finance Minister stated that there were demands that the government should do something about it.
- The proposed law seeks to enforce banking regulation guidelines of the RBI in cooperative banks while administrative issues will still be guided by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies.

Revision Points

Name of the Organization	Headquarters	Head of the Organization
Reserve Bank of India	Mumbai	Shaktikanta Das
Paytm	Noida	Vijay Shekhar Sharma (Founder)
Kotak Mahindra Bank	Mumbai	Uday Kotak
Allahabad Bank	Kolkata	K Ramachandran (Executive Director)
NABARD	Mumbai	Harsh Kumar Bhanala
SBI Card	Guragon	Hardayal Prasad
IRDAI	Hyderabad	Subhash Chandra Khuntia
Axis Bank	Mumbai	Rakesh Makhija

Securities and Exchange Board of India	Mumbai	Ajay Tyagi
Central Bank of India	Mumbai	Pallav Mohapatra
NPCI	Mumbai	DilipAsbe
State Bank of India	Mumbai	Rajnish Kumar
Paytm Payments Bank	Noida	Satish Kumar Gupta
Bank of America	Charlotte, USA	Brian Moynihan
Bombay Stock Exchange	Mumbai	Ashish Chauhan
ICICI Bank	Mumbai	Sandeep Bakshi
Andhra Bank	Hyderabad	J Packirisamy
Bharti Axa General Insurance	Mumbai	Vikas Seth
Canara Bank	Bengaluru	Lingam Venkat Prabhakar
Oriental Bank of Commerce	Gurugram	Mukesh Kumar Jain
United Bank of India	Kolkata	Ashok Kumar Pradha
Punjab National Bank	New Delhi	S.S. Mallikarjuna Rao
Syndicate Bank	Manipal	Mrutyunjay Mahapatra
Corporation Bank	Mangalore	PV Bharathi
Union Bank of India	Mumbai	Rajkiran Rai G
Indian Bank	Chennai	Padmaja Chunduru
Bank of Baroda	Vadodara	Hasmukh Adhia
Oriental Insurance Company	New Delhi	Girija Kumar A.V.
National Insurance Company	Kolkata	Tajinder Mukherjee
United India Insurance Company	Chennai	Girish Radhakrishnan
Life Insurance Corporation of India	Mumbai	M R Kumar
DBS Bank	Singapore	Piyush Gupta
YES Bank	Mumbai	Prashant Kumar
IDFC First Bank	Mumbai	V Vaidyanathan

Important Financial & Economy Affairs

ORGANISATION	GDP RATE	
	2019 – 20 (FY20)	2020 – 21(FY21)
OECD	4.9%	5.1%

Moody's	2.5% (CY 2020)	3.2%
UBS	4.8%	4%
S & P	5.2% (CY 2020)	
Fitch Ratings		4.6%
Bank of America		5.1%
CRISIL		3.5%
ICRA	4.7%	4.2%
Nomura	-0.5%	
India Ratings		3.6%

S&P estimates cost of Covid-19 for Asia-Pacific, including India, at \$620 billion

- With the Covid-19 pandemic spreading rapidly, **S&P Global Ratings** updated its estimate of economic loss to **\$620 billion** for the Asia-Pacific region, which includes India. It has already lowered growth projection for India and other countries.
- The total and permanent income loss for Asia-Pacific of approximately \$620 billion will be distributed across sovereign, bank, corporate, and household balance sheets. In rupee terms, it comes to around **₹46,500 crore** (\$1 = ₹75). The agency lists 14 countries in its report for Asia-Pacific region, which includes mainly China, Japan, Australia and India
- In its latest report, the agency lowered estimate for next fiscal (2020-21, starting from April 1) from its December forecast of 6.5 per cent to 5.2 per cent. Similarly, for fiscal year 2021-22, projection for growth rate was revised by 10 basis point to 6.9 per cent. However, for the next two years (2022-23 and 2023-24), estimates remained at 7 per cent for both fiscals.

HDFC Mutual Fund subsidiary buys 5.45 per cent SpiceJet stake from open market

- HDFC Trustee Company Limited, a subsidiary of **HDFC Mutual Fund**, has bought 3.4 crore shares of domestic carrier **SpiceJet** from the open market, which accounts for **5.45 per cent stake** in the private airline.
- The open market stake purchase comes days after rating agency CRISIL downgraded the rating for SpiceJet's short-term loans from **'BB-' to 'B'** on significant deterioration of business risk profile amidst the coronavirus lockdown.
- Industry observers believe that GoAir and SpiceJet have been hit the worst due to the ban on international and domestic flights, as they don't have the requisite cash flow.
- For SpiceJet, and the aviation industry in general, a lot is dependent on the soon-to-be-announced relief package from the government intended at supporting the sectors financially hit by coronavirus. Recent reports have claimed that aviation sector may incur losses of over \$3 billion by Q1FY21 due to the suspension of flights.

ITC sets up ₹50 crore Covid Contingency Fund

- ITC is setting up a **Contingency Fund of Rs 150 crore** to address and manage the challenges arising out of the Covid-19 epidemic. This fund will be utilised primarily to provide relief to the vulnerable and most needy sections of society who have been harshly impacted by the pandemic and have faced significant disruption in their livelihoods.
- Besides, the fund will collaborate with District Authorities to assist with to the district health and rural healthcare ecosystem that reaches out to the weakest sections of society.
- Further, it is also envisaged that the resources under this fund will be channelised towards the protection and well-being of the ground forces who are doing commendable work to reach medicines, groceries, other essential goods, sourcing of agri-commodities and so on for people across the country during the lockdown, by providing personal protective gear and hygiene products to such frontline warriors, ITC stated in a statement.

Centre rolls back NRI tax, restricts levy only on their income generated in India

- The government has decided to restrict taxation only to the income generated by them from businesses in India, leaving their global income out of any levy. Moreover, taxes would need to be paid only on income of **above Rs 15 lakhs**.
- The changes formed part of the amendments in the **Finance Bill, 2020** proposed by Finance Minister in Parliament. The Lok Sabha passed the Finance Bill by voice vote without discussion.
- The budget proposal for taxing dividends in the hands of shareholders by abolishing the dividend distribution tax (DDT) has, however, been retained.
- Further, the TDS rate on payment of dividend to non-resident and foreign company has been prescribed at **20 per cent**. The Finance Bill earlier had not provided any specific rate of TDS in respect of payment of dividend to non-residents and foreign companies with the result such dividend would have fallen in residual clause of 40 per cent. The TDS rate of 10 per cent on dividend for resident is already prescribed in the Finance Bill.
- Proposal to levy (tax collected at source) TCS on sale of goods is to continue despite huge paperwork and compliance obligations. However, exemption of such TCS in respect of Export Sales and also to sellers in respect of Import has been provided. But this provision along with TCS on foreign remittance will be applicable from October 1, 2020.
- Moreover, the provision for tax to be deducted at **2 per cent** on withdrawal of cash from Bank, Co-opt Bank and Post Office exceeding Rs. 1 crore in aggregate during the year has been amended. Now, in case of a person who has not filed the returns for preceding 3 years then tax will be deducted at 2 per cent on withdrawal exceeding Rs 20 lakhs and at 5 per cent on withdrawal exceeding Rs 1 crore. This provision will be applicable from July 1, 2020.
- Government's budget proposal on NRIs had dented sentiments as this community is seen as a big investor in the development of the country. The budget not only changed the qualification criteria of NRIs mandating them a higher number of days stay overseas but also introduced a provision that would have made them liable for tax in India on their incomes generated outside the country.

- In the Union Budget 2020-2021, the government proposed to spend Rs 30,42,230crore in the next financial year, 12.7 per cent higher than the revised estimate of 2019-20. By passing the Bill, these financial proposals have been given effect.
- The government has assumed a nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 10 per cent in 2020-21, versus the nominal growth estimate at 12 per cent for 2019-20. It expects that receipts will increase by 16.3 per cent to Rs 22,45,893crore, owing to higher estimated revenue from divestment.

Last date for filing income tax return for FY 2018-19 extended till June 30; Debit card holders allowed to withdraw money from ATM of any bank without charges

- Finance Minister **NirmalaSitharaman** announced several measures to give relief to the people and business communities by relaxing the compliance and regulatory norms in the wake of corona virus outbreak in the country.
- The Minister announced that last date for filing of income tax return for the financial year 2018-19 has been extended till **30th June** of this year. She stated, interest on delayed payment of income tax reduced to 9 per cent from the 12 per cent. She stated, delayed deposit of **TDS** will attract **nine per cent interest**.
- Ms.Sitharaman stated, **PAN-Aadhar linking and Vivad Se Vishwas** scheme have also been extended till **30th June**. She clarified that no additional payment of 10 per cent would be levied on the people who wants to take benefit of this scheme.
- The Minister has also announced that last date for filling of March, April and May 2020 GST and composition return have also been extended till June
- Government has decided that no interest, penalty and late fees will be imposed on those companies which have turnover less than **five crores**. The companies which have more than five crore turn over will attract **9 per cent interest** without imposition of any late fee and penalty.
- She stated, **SabkaSath, SabkaVishwas** scheme launched for settling disputes related to indirect taxes has also been extended till June. She stated, custom clearance will remain open 24 X 7. She stated, no additional fees shall be charged for late filing during a moratorium period from **1st April to 30th September** of this year.
- She stated, the mandatory requirement for holding meetings of the board of companies shall be extended by a period of 60 days. She stated, government has decided to raise the threshold of default to one crore rupees from the existing threshold of one lakh rupees. She stated, the step will prevent triggering of insolvency proceedings against Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- In a major relief to people, government has decided that debit card holders can withdraw money from any branch of any banks without paying charge for the next **three months**. Government has also abolished the minimum balance requirement limit.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code threshold raised to Rs 1 crore to protect MSMEs: Finance Minister

- With the countrywide lockdown expected to hit small and medium businesses the hardest, the government moved to protect them from bankruptcy proceedings.

- It has declared that the minimum threshold for defaults under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** will be raised from **Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore**.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who made the announcement, also stated that the government will consider suspending **Sections 7, 9, 10** of the IBC for **six months** if the current economic situation continues beyond April. She added that this would help companies being forced into insolvency on default of loans.
- While Section 7 says a financial creditor or creditors can individually or jointly file an application for initiating corporate insolvency resolution process against a corporate debtor, Section 9 says that after 10 days of serving a notice, an operational creditor may initiate the insolvency resolution process.
- The CAIT, while welcoming the measures, stated that repayment of bank loans, EMIs and other banking obligations should be extended up to September 30 and no interest or penalty should be charged on the extended period.

NBFCs seek moratorium on EMIs for at least 3 months

- The **Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC)** has requested the Reserve Bank of India and the Government to announce a moratorium on EMI (equated monthly instalment) payment for at least **a three months**; allow restructuring of accounts that may become delinquent; and extend the period for recognition of **non-performing assets (NPAs)** from the current three months to six months past the due date.
- FIDC, which is the representative body of assets and loan financing NBFCs, reasoned that the Covid-19 pandemic is expected to have a significant and perhaps a long-term impact on the Indian economy, especially the MSME, auto, transportation and trading segments.

Manikaran Power becomes first member of India's gas trading platform

- The gas trading platform of Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) has found its first member in **Manikaran Power Ltd (MPL)**. Called **the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX)**, it will be India's **first gas trading platform**.
- IGX would offer spot and forward contracts at Dahej, Hazira and Kakinada. While Petronet LNG Ltd (PLL) operates a LNG terminal at Dahej, Shell operates another one at Hazira. Kakinada is the landfall point for natural gas being produced from the Krishna Godavari basin.
- MPL which is already trading member in IEX, is the first to join hands with IGX.
- MPL is an inter-state trading licensee and a trading member on IEX and trading cum clearing member on Power Exchange India Limited (PXIL).
- MPL provides electronic platform for trading of power at IEX and PXIL, documentation and assistance in bilateral trading of power, REC trading and group captive. Its website states that it has close to 2,000 clients in both power trading and RECs.

TCS again overtakes Reliance Industries to become most valued firm by market capitalisation

- **Tata Consultancy Services** went past **Reliance Industries Limited** yet again to become the most valued Indian firm by market valuation.

- At close of trade on the BSE, the market capitalisation (m-cap) of TCS was at Rs 6,19,499.95 crore, which is Rs 5,320.02 crore more than that of RIL's Rs 6,14,179.93 crore valuation. RIL shares witnessed selling pressure, falling 3.97 per cent to close the day at Rs 968.85.
- Reliance shares came under massive selling pressure amid plunge in international oil prices. In just about four months, Reliance Industries m-cap has slumped from the highs of Rs 10 lakh crore it hit in November last year.
- RIL and TCS have in the past also competed with each other for the number one position in terms of market capitalisation. At close of trade, the market capitalisation chart was topped by TCS followed by **RIL, HDFC Bank, HUL** and **HDFC**. The m-cap figure of companies changes daily with the movement in their stock prices.

FDI inflows recorded highest ever for fiscal year 2018-19

- The total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow was over **318 billion US dollars** between 2014 and September 2019 representing nearly 50 percent of the cumulative FDI in India since April 2000.
- In 2018-19, the FDI inflow stood at a record 62 billion US dollars, highest ever recorded for a fiscal year.
- FDI can be one measure to track the growth of Make in India.
- The initiative was launched in 2014 for promoting India as an important investment destination and a global hub for manufacturing, design and innovation.

India's current account deficit narrows to \$1.4 bn in December quarter

- The country's **current account deficit (CAD)** narrowed sharply to **\$1.4 billion**, or **0.2 per cent of GDP**, for the December 2019 quarter, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) stated. The deficit had stood at **2.7 per cent** in the corresponding quarter a year ago and **0.9 per cent** in the previous quarter.
- The sharp contraction in the deficit was mainly due to a lower trade deficit of \$34.6 billion, and a rise in net services receipts, the central bank stated.
- The foreign exchange market tracks the gap closely, and the release of the data comes on a day when the rupee depreciated to a 17-month low of 74.24 against the dollar. During the 'taper tantrum' episode of 2013, the CAD at record highs was one of the reasons for the rupee to be hammered. For the first nine months of the financial year, the CAD has narrowed to 1 per cent, the RBI stated.

GOKADDAL - World's first Digital Solutions Exchange Cloud launched in India

- **GOKADDAL**, world's **first Digital Solutions Exchange** in the cloud has been launched in India.
- **www.gokaddal.com** is a one of its kind solutions aggregator, marketplace and cloud delivery platform with focus on four A's: Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Analytics and Augmentative Technologies.
- GOKADDAL is created to help solution seekers (customers) realize their digital transformation vision, by bringing to them right solutions with right tools and right providers.
- GOKADDAL Technologies is a **Dubai** based emerging technology company, part of Merkado group which operates Merkado RHA Technology and Merkado RHA Services based at Bangalore. GOKADDAL is led by well-known Digital Disrupter and Industry expert, Ravinder Pal Singh, Ex Cisco and Dell Executive.

FICCI-IBA survey Says Proportion of Banks Reporting Rise in NPA Levels Increases From 26% To 28% In July to December 2019

- The tenth round of the **FICCI-IBA survey** was carried out for the period **July to December 2019**. A total of 18 banks consisting of public sector, private sector and foreign banks participated in the survey. These banks together represent about 50% of the banking industry, as classified by asset size.
- The 10th FICCI-IBA survey asked bankers about their views on the measures that would help to improve the economic situation. Banks are of the view that rural distress should be addressed through laying emphasis on rural infrastructure development and stimulating demand by increasing the pace of fund transfers under the PM-Kisan and MGNREGA schemes. Some of the respondent banks also suggested that the government could undertake structural land and labour reforms, while taking measures to increase job creation in the country.
- A large number of participating bankers have mentioned that addressing the taxation issues by launching GST 2.0 regime and bringing a direct income tax code should be the top priority of the government at this moment.
- In the current round of Bankers' survey, a relatively lower proportion of responding banks have reported a decline in the level of NPAs. As compared to the first half of 2019 in which nearly **52%** of the respondents had reported a decline in the NPA levels, the proportion of respondent banks citing a reduction in NPAs in the current round of survey has reduced to **39%**. The proportion of respondent banks reporting a rise in the NPA levels on the other hand has shown slight increase to **28%** as against **26%** in the preceding survey.

Govt has collected Rs 7.52 trillion direct tax in Apr-Jan

- The government has collected over **Rs 7.52 trillion** as **direct taxes** till January 31 of the current fiscal. The Revised Estimate (RE) has pegged the target for collection of direct taxes for the current fiscal, which ends on **March 31**, at **Rs 11.70 trillion**.
- The total amount collected under direct tax collection, as on **31st January, 2020** is Rs 7,52,472 crore, He stated the last advance tax instalment is due in March 2020, and hence it is little premature to predict the final collection of direct taxes for the current year at this stage.
- Thakur stated RE for current fiscal has projected revenue receipts at Rs 18.50 trillion, lower than Rs 19.62 trillion projected in the Budget.
- The fiscal deficit estimated for the current fiscal has been revised upwards to **3.8 per cent** of **GDP**, from the budgeted **3.3 per cent**.

FDI inflow dips 1.4% to \$ 10.67 bn in October-December

- **Foreign direct investment** into India dipped marginally by **1.4 per cent** to **\$ 10.67 billion** (about Rs 76,800 crore) during October-December period of 2019-20, according to government data.
- Inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) during October-December of 2018-19 stood at \$ 10.82 billion. FDI inflows in July-September period of the current financial year stood at \$ 9.77 billion.

- Sectors which attracted maximum foreign inflows during the nine month period include services (\$ 6.52 billion), computer software and hardware (\$ 6.35 billion), telecommunications (\$ 4.29 billion), automobile (\$ 2.50 billion) and trading (\$ 3.52 billion).
- **Singapore** continued to be the **largest source of FDI** in India during **April-December period** of the current financial year with \$ 11.65 billion investments. It was followed by **Mauritius (\$ 7.45 billion)**, the Netherlands (\$ 3.53 billion), Japan (\$ 2.80 billion) and the US (\$ 2.79 billion).

Fitch cuts India growth forecast to 4.9 per cent for fiscal year 2020-21

- Fitch Ratings cut its forecast for India's economic growth to **4.9 per cent** in the current fiscal on weak domestic demand and supply chain disruptions due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- It stated that the GDP growth is forecast to recover slightly to **5.4 per cent** in 2020-21 (April 2020 to March 2021).
- Fitch Solutions are revising down our forecast for India's real GDP growth to **4.9 per cent** in FY2019/20, from **5.1 per cent** previously, and 5.4 per cent in FY2020/21, from 5.9 per cent previously, the agency stated in its outlook for the country.
- India's real GDP growth decelerated to **4.7 per cent** in the third quarter (October-December) from an upwardly revised **5.1 per cent** in the second quarter owing to slower government consumption.
- The growth deceleration in the third quarter was mainly due to a collapse in gross fixed capital growth, which contracted by 4.5 per cent, and slowdown in government consumption growth to 11.8 per cent from 13.2 per cent in the second quarter.

Unemployment rate rises to 7.78 per cent in February, highest in four months

- India's unemployment rate rose to **7.78 per cent** in February from **7.16 per cent** in January, the highest since October last year, according to a report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).
- According to the Mumbai-based private think-tank, the unemployment rate in rural areas surged to **7.37 per cent** in February 2020 from **5.97 per cent** in January. However, the trend was the opposite in urban areas as it fell to 8.65 per cent from 9.7 per cent, according to a report by Reuters.

GST collection crosses Rs one lakh crore mark in February

- Government has collected over **one lakh five thousand crore** rupees as **Goods and Services Tax** in February this year which is **eight percent** more than the GST collected in the same month of last year.
- Out of the total revenue, Central Goods and Service Tax (CGST) is over 20 thousand crore rupees, State Goods and Service Tax (SGST) is over 27 thousand crore and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) is over 48 thousand crore rupees.
- Finance Ministry stated, during the month of February, the GST revenue from domestic transactions has shown a growth of **12 percent** over the revenue during the month of February last year.

Govt to infuse ₹200 crore in IFCI next fiscal

- The government has decided to pump **₹200 crore** into **Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI)**, the country's oldest term lending institution, through the preferential allotment route next fiscal to shore up its capital and enhance operations.
- The Government of India holding in the non-banking finance company, which stood at **56.42 per cent** at the end of December 2019, would increase after the capital infusion.
- The (Rs 200 crore) provision is for equity support to IFCI keeping in view the business programme and capital requirement," as per the Budget documents presented in Parliament last month.
- For the current fiscal as well, the government has earmarked **₹200 crore capital infusion** for **IFCI**, as per the Revised Estimate.

Bank credit growth dips to 8.5 per cent in January: RBI data

- Bank loan growth to NBFCs slowed to **32.2 per cent** in the reporting month from a growth of **48.3 per cent** a year-ago.
- Bank credit growth declined to **8.5 per cent** in January from **13.5 per cent** in the year-ago period led by a sharp slowdown in loans to the services sector, according to the data compiled by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- Growth in advances to the services sector decelerated to **8.9 per cent** from 23.9 per cent in January 2019. During the month, personal loans segment grew by 16.9 per cent.
- Within personal loans, credit to housing segment grew by 17.5 per cent from 18.4 per cent, while education loan showed a negative growth of 3.1 per cent as against a negative growth of 2.3 per cent in January 2019, RBI data showed.
- Advances growth to agriculture and allied activities contracted to 6.5 per cent from 7.6 per cent rise last year. Credit growth to industry decelerated to **2.5 per cent** from **5.2 per cent**.
- The country's GDP grew at **4.7 per cent** in the December quarter, its slowest rate in more than six years.

Important Business News

Amul to help J&K dairies scale up their operations

- **Amul** has extended support to dairy cooperatives in **Jammu and Kashmir** to help the region achieve self-sufficiency in dairy products.
- **Jammu and Kashmir** is estimated to have high consumption of dairy products worth **₹100-800 crore**, sourced from different parts of the country.
- Tie-up with local dairies, **RS Sodhi**, managing director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF) – Amul marketer – stated the local dairy cooperatives in J&K will be provided handholding on the technical, administrative and procurement side to reduce their dependence on dairy products sourced from outside.
- J&K Lieutenant Governor **GC Murmu**, who was in Ahmedabad recently, has signed **35 MoUs worth ₹,641 crore** with Gujarat-based companies and organisations.

Alphabet to donate \$800 mn in response to coronavirus outbreak

- **Alphabet Inc** will donate more than **\$800 million** (645 million pounds) in funds towards producing medical supplies used to fight COVID-19, and in ad credits to government and health organizations and businesses, Chief Executive Officer SundarPichai stated
- The company is working with Magid Glove and Safety to produce 2 million to 3 million face masks, and will financially support efforts to boost the production capacity for lifesaving medical devices and personal protective equipment, Pichai stated.
- The rapid outbreak, which has killed nearly 25,000 people globally, has strained healthcare systems around the world and led to a shortage of medical equipment including face masks and ventilators.
- The company will provide **\$340 million** in Google ad credits to small and medium businesses active on its platform and **\$250 million** in ad grants for the World Health Organization and many government agencies.

Abbott launches 5-minute Covid-19 test for use almost anywhere

- **Abbott Laboratories** is unveiling a **coronavirus test** that can tell if someone is infected in as little as 5 minutes, and is so small and portable; it can be used in almost any health-care setting.
- The medical-device maker plans to supply 50,000 tests a day starting April 1, stated John Frels, vice president of research and development at Abbott Diagnostics. The molecular test looks for fragments of the coronavirus genome, which can be detected in as little as five minutes when it's present at high levels. A thorough search to definitively rule out an infection can take up to 13 minutes, he stated.
- The U.S. has struggled to supply enough tests to detect the coronavirus, even as the outbreak threatens to overwhelm hospitals in New York, California, Washington and other regions. After initially restricting testing to high-risk people, and problems with a test designed by the Centre's for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. regulators have rushed out diagnostics made by the world's leading commercial-testing companies.
- The technology builds on Illinois-based Abbotts ID Now platform, the most common point-of-care test currently available in the U.S., with more than 18,000 units spread across the country. It is widely used to detect influenza, strep throat and respiratory syncytial virus, a common bug that causes cold-like symptoms.

Microsoft, US CDC tie-up to create 'Clara', a COVID-19 self-screening bot

- The **U.S. Centers for Disease Control** and Prevention has introduced an **AI bot** called '**Clara**' to help people assess potential symptoms of COVID-19.
- The CDC has partnered up with **CDC Foundation** and **Microsoft Azure's Healthcare Bot service** to create **Clara**, the "**coronavirus self-checker.**" the bot is currently only available in the US on the CDC website.
- Bot can quickly assess the symptoms and risk factors for people worried about infection, provide information and suggest the next course of action such as contacting a medical provider or, for those who do not need in-person medical care, managing the illness safely at home.
- The bot helps users in self-screening to decide whether or not would they need a test, thus freeing up resources.
- **Coronavirus Risk Scan** by **Apollo** is designed to decrease the paranoia by generating a risk score based on your current symptoms. This will clear your doubts on whether you have or are likely to contract the novel.

- The **risk-assessment test** is designed based on advice from the **World Health Organization** and the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare India**.
- **Apple** also updated its **voice assistant Siri** for Apple users in the US. Siri will now provide a step by step guide to users who ask questions that are variations of “Siri, do I have the coronavirus?” The guide is also based on **advice and guidelines by WHO**. If a person shows severe symptoms, they will be prompted by Siri to call **911**.

In Mumbai, Reliance Industries sets up India's first Covid-19 dedicated hospital

- **Reliance Industries Limited (RIL)** has set up **India's first COVID-19 dedicated hospital in Mumbai** that includes a negative pressure room that helps in preventing cross-contamination and helps control infection.
- **Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital** in collaboration with the **Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)**, has set up a dedicated 100 bedded COVID-19 centre at Seven Hills Hospital, Mumbai for patients who test positive for COVID-19
- This first-of-its-kind-in-India centre is fully funded by Reliance Foundation and includes a negative pressure room that helps in preventing cross-contamination and helps control infection.
- **RIL** has also announced initial support of **₹ crores** to Maharashtra Chief Minister's **Relief Fund** to combat coronavirus spread.

Pune firm gets approval for first 'Made in India' Covid-19 testing kit

- A **Pune-based company Mylabs** has received commercial approval from the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** for its **Covid-19 test kit**.
- With emphasis on 'Make in India' and support from local and central government, the Covid- 19 kit has been made as per WHO/CDC guidelines.
- The kit will cost nearly one-fourth of the current procurement cost.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has given a green signal to 16 private laboratories across the country to conduct Covid-19 testing in India.
- The apex medical research body has also issued guidelines for private laboratories by capping the test rates.

Google launches dedicated Covid-19 search portal in India

- **Google** has launched its dedicated search portal with **Covid-19** related information including safety tips, important information and relevant contacts in India.
- The search giant displays a snippet of the page with consolidated information right at the top of the search results when users search for '**coronavirus**' or '**Covid-19**' on both, desktop as well as mobile devices.
- The portal was which was launched in the US on March 21 has now been extended to India. The information displayed in the section is divided into four tabs-overview, symptoms, prevention and treatments.
- The symptoms, prevention and treatment sections have detailed information regarding the same provided by the World Health Organization.

- Google will be adding more information over time to its portal. It will soon include a carousel of Twitter accounts from local civic organisations and health authorities. It will also be adding detailed modules with statistics and a map that can help the status of Covid-19 prevalence in countries around the world according to its official blog post.

Paytm Payments Bank to now issue Visa debit cards

- **Paytm Payments Bank** Ltd (PPBL) announced that it will now start issuing **Visa debit cards** to its customers. With this partnership, Paytm is targeting to issue over **10 million new digital debit cards** in **FY 20-21**. The bank, known for introducing **neo-banking** in the country, is already the largest issuer of **RuPay Debit Cards** and has the fastest growing bank account base.
- Paytm Payments Bank will issue **Visa virtual debit cards** to its customers, which will enable them to transact at all merchants accepting payments through cards.
- For the first time, the bank's customers will also be able to make international transactions using their Visa debit cards.
- Soon, the customers will also have an option to request for a physical card. This will enable customers to make contactless payment through their **chip-inserted cards**.
- With over **57 million digital debit cards**, the payments bank now has a debit card in every district of India.

Cashfree launches digital payments solution for businesses

- **Digital payments platform, Cashfree**, has launched UPI Stack for Businesses, allowing businesses to collect and disburse UPI payments.
- The product will be available through every **UPI app**, across both web and mobile (Android & iOS) platforms. Software developers will also be able to implement a desired payment flow for preferred platforms and collect payments via all UPI-based apps, the company stated.
- Cashfree's move is in line with the new provision in the Income Tax Rules that mandates businesses with a turnover of over **Rs. 50 crore** should provide facilities to accept payments through prescribed electronic modes, including UPI

AI chat bot 'Maya', a handy tool for Clix customers

- At a time of social distancing due to the outbreak of coronavirus, **Clix Capital Services**, a digital lender, has come up with '**Maya**', an AI-enabled chat bot to enhance customer experience.
- This chat bot is expected to help customers engage with Clix for a variety of activities, including **EMI-related queries**, and avail cross-sell offers besides servicing.
- Because it is conversational and not menu-based, customers can easily engage with bot than on a binary machine or a human being. In the current unfortunate environment of coronavirus when physical contact could be avoided, the bot will come significantly handy for a company like Clix to take it forward, stated Gupta.
- The bot will give customers a 360 degree view on what will be available and eventually the company plans to put in place multiple bots (such as servicing bots)

Crypto exchange Binance, WazirX set up USD 50 million Indian blockchain fund

- After the Supreme Court lifted ban on financial institutions to trade in digital currencies, global cryptocurrency exchange, **Binance** announced a **\$50 million blockchain** fund for **India** along with **WazirX**, a homegrown crypto start-up, which it acquired last year.
- Binance's investments in the blockchain ecosystem come at a time when the world's largest cryptocurrency Bitcoin saw a sudden dip below \$5,000 as markets across the world crashed amid Coronavirus scare.
- The global digital trading exchange stated the fund created will help in pushing the growth of blockchain ecosystem by funding start-ups. The investments will include, but not limited to, fiat-to-digital assets gateway solutions, trading platforms, payment, and remittance solutions, digital asset wallets, stable coins, DeFi platforms, decentralised applications etc., Binance stated.
- The investments in the form of equity and tokens will range from **\$100,000 to \$5 million**. **Binance** and **WazirX** will partner with venture funds in India investing in blockchain technology. It also aims to leverage the growing interest of Millennials in the digital currency and provide mentorship to universities and student organisations by setting incubators.

Microsoft India, NASSCOM Foundation Launch Initiative To Empower People With Disabilities

- **Microsoft India and NASSCOM Foundation** launched the **Innovate for Accessible India** campaign aimed at **empowering people with disabilities with the technology and tools** required for **better integration into society and access to equal opportunities**.
- The campaign will be an aggregator of workable technology solutions developed using Microsoft cloud, artificial intelligence and other technologies that address gaps faced by people with disabilities, especially in acquiring services and support in education, skill building, employment, mobility, rehabilitation and other government services.
- The campaign is in partnership with **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Department of Science and Technology, and National Research and Education Network**.

Oil India signs crude sales agreement with Numaligarh Refinery

- **Oil India Ltd (OIL)**, the country's second-largest national oil explorer, announced it has signed an agreement with **Numaligarh Refinery** for sale and purchase of crude oil.
- The **Crude Oil Sales Agreement (COSA)** will come in effect from 1 April, 2020 to 31 March 2025, that is, for a term of **five years**, OIL stated in a statement. The pact was signed by the finance directors of the two companies.
- The agreement is expected to streamline sale and purchase transactions of crude oil produced from fields in the North East India

Rolls-Royce partners with IIT-Madras for joint research programmes

- **Rolls-Royce** has collaborated with the **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M)** to promote joint research programmes.
- Rolls Royce will promote upskilling and professional development of its engineering talent, and facilitate higher education and research. The company will also sponsor select employees keen to pursue Masters and PhD level studies, in partnership with IIT Madras.

- To qualify for the programme, employees must first clear IIT-M's selection process, and their topic should be aligned with Rolls-Royce strategic research priorities and capabilities. Rolls-Royce will also roll out a Technical Higher Study Framework to facilitate higher education for its engineers, in partnership with IIT-M.

Facebook launches 'Pragati' to boost women entrepreneurship in India

- **Facebook India** called for applications for its CSR initiative, Facebook **Pragati**, powered by N/Core (The/Nudge Centre for Social Innovation).
- The initiative will incubate and accelerate early-stage women-led non-profits that are working to drive women entrepreneurship and to spread awareness and adoption of technology among women in India. Facebook Pragati will award four grants of up to **₹0 lakh** for each non-profit to scale their work.
- Our CSR focus with Facebook **Pragati** will be to empower women to set-up and grow their businesses, and contribute to making the country economically and socially stronger, he added
- Non-profits that are less than three years old and have at least one woman founder can apply. They should be able to demonstrate a viable business plan.

Zomato enters fintech space, launches co-branded credit card with RBL, Master Card

- Gurugram-based food delivery giant **Zomato** has inked a strategic partnership with **Master Card** and **RBL** to launch a **co-branded credit card**. Joining the likes of Amazon, Ola and Flipkart in the fintech space, the online food delivery platform will offer a host of benefits to the cardholders.
- The move is also seen as the company's efforts to soar Zomato Gold's membership. Through this collaboration, RBL and Zomato are targeting to issue one million credit cards in the first two years to Zomato users in India. The cards come in two variants — Edition and Edition Classic. The Edition Classic starts with an annual membership of Rs 500 (exclusive of taxes). Its features include Zomato credit on every purchase — online and offline — both which can be redeemed at Zomato-partnered restaurants.
- Currently, RBL Bank has over **2.5 million credit cardholders** and services over **7.8 million customers**. Zomato, on the other hand, is present in over 500 cities in India, with over 2 lakh delivery partners that ferry orders throughout the day. The number of restaurant listings globally on Zomato stood at 1.5 million as of September 2019. Its Gold program has 1.4 million subscribers, according to its half yearly report in October last year.

CoinDCX launches crypto-referral initiative in India

- **CoinDCX**, a cryptocurrency trading platform has launched its crypto-referral initiative in India.
- This initiative is aimed at providing an incentive for crypto adoption by rewarding Rs 500 for every new referral in addition to Rs 500 worth of Bitcoin for every new user.
- This programme, the company believes, will be one of the largest referral programmes in the Indian crypto sector.

Govt approves TCS, DLF proposals to set up SEZs for IT in Haryana, UP

- The government has approved the proposals of software firm **TCS** and realty major **DLF** to set up special economic zones (SEZs) for IT sector in **Haryana and Uttar Pradesh**.

- **TCS** has proposed to set up an IT/ITeS SEZ in **Noida, Uttar Pradesh**, on 19.9 hectares land. The total proposed investment for the project is Rs 2,433.72 crore.
- **DLF** has proposed to set up two SEZs in **Haryana**. The proposed investments for these projects are Rs 793.95 crore and Rs 761.54 crore.
- Exports from these zones grew by about 14.5 per cent to Rs 3.82 lakh crore in April-September 2019-20. It was Rs 7.02 lakh crore in entire 2018-19 financial year.

Google India Launches Skill Development Programme For Women

- Google India introduced **DigiPivot**, a skilling programme designed for women who are looking to return to their corporate careers after a break or simply planning to make mid-career shifts to digital marketing.
- Developed in association with **Avtar**, a career portal service for women, and **the Indian School of Business**, the programme aims **to influence the overall gender mix in the digital marketing landscape in India** and will provide an opportunity for 200 women professionals to re-skill themselves.
- The programme will culminate in a day-long graduation event at the Google Hyderabad Campus.
- The programme is open to both women professionals who are currently working and those who are keen to return to the workforce with 4-10 years of experience in consulting, analytics, branding and sales and support with passion for digital marketing.

Microsoft, Accenture join to provide tech support to social enterprise startups

- Intending to help deepen the reach of **entrepreneurs and start-ups** that are focused on social impact and sustainability, the joint initiative by **Microsoft** and **Accenture** aims to provide hands-on support and technologies to social enterprises, helping them build scalable solutions and business models that can lead to more tangible and lasting benefits.
- Microsoft and Accenture's collaboration is part of their shared vision to democratise access to impactful technology. Through the programme, **Microsoft Research India** and **Accenture Labs** will help social enterprise startups test and validate proof-of-concepts, conduct design thinking sessions to help them re-envision the impact of their solutions, and provide support in exploring and using Microsoft technologies.
- The programme will initially engage with startups in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, leveraging the MSR India Centre for Societal impact through cloud and AI.

After Mumbai, Google to launch its cloud infrastructure in Delhi by 2021

- **Google** announced that it plans to open cloud region in **Delhi** that is expected to be operational by **2021**.
- This will be the company's second cloud region in India; the first one was in **Mumbai** that was launched in 2017.
- The new cloud region will expand Google's existing network which stands at eight regions in the Asia Pacific and 22 regions globally.
- Google cloud regions bring Google Cloud Platform (GCP) services to global organisations in industries like media and entertainment, retail and manufacturing.
- Projected to launch in 2021, the Delhi cloud region will have three zones to protect against service disruptions.

- The region will also include a portfolio of key GCP products, offer lower latency to nearby users and, when combined with the existing region in Mumbai, enable geographically separate in-country disaster recovery for the customers' mission-critical applications

Zomato buys UberEats India for \$206 million

- **Uber** sold its food delivery business in India to food-tech giant **Zomato** for **\$206 million** according to the firm's recent regulatory filings.
- Zomato had acquired UberEats India in January in an all-stock transaction with UberEats selling the business for a **9.99 per cent** stake in the online food delivery business.
- Zomato, apart from the payout also reimbursed \$35 million in goods and services tax to the US-based ride-hailing giant.
- The estimated fair value of the consideration received is \$206 million, which includes the investment valued at \$171 million and the \$35 million of reimbursement of goods and services tax receivable from Zomato, Uber stated.

Indian Railways turns old coaches to restaurant on wheels

- Indian Railways launched its first '**Restaurant on Wheels**' at the circulating area of **Asansol railway station** for the use of passengers as well as the general public of Asansol.
- The Minister of State for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, **Babul Supriyo**, inaugurated this first of its kind restaurant at a program held in **Asansol, West Bengal**.
- The 'Restaurant on Wheels' at Asansol station circulating area was developed by refurbishing two, over-aged Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) coaches. This unique effort will not only improve the facilities at Asansol station but also generate non-fare revenue earnings of approximately Rs 50 lakh in the next five years. The restaurant is called '**Wow Bhojan**', while the **tea boutique** is called '**Chai-Chun**'.
- Supriyo also inaugurated two new air-conditioned retiring rooms and Electronic Reservation Chart Display System and a battery-operated car at Asansol station.

RBL, Zomato launch co-branded credit card offering cash back and loyalty membership benefits

- **RBL Bank** and **Zomato** launched a **co-branded credit card**, powered by **Mastercard** to tap the potential of online food delivery market which has been expanding beyond big cities.
- The co-branded card, which comes in two variants -- Edition and Edition Classic, will offer benefits such as Zomato Gold membership, cash back as well as airport lounge access. Customers will get Zomato credits on every use, both online and offline.
- The partnership, an addition to the lender's co-branded credit cards business, will be beneficial as online food delivery has witnessed a growing trend, **Utkarsh Saxena**, Head Products-Credit Cards, RBL Bank stated.

BEE launches star rating programme for Deep Freezer and Light Commercial Air Conditioners (LCAC)

- To commemorate its 19th foundation day, **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, Ministry of Power, Government of India organized a Stakeholder Consultation to develop a vision towards building an energy efficient India.

- The Star Labelling Programme has been formulated by **Bureau of Energy Efficiency**, as part of its mandate, under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**. Under this Programme, BEE has covered 24 appliances till date wherein 10 appliances are under mandatory regime. On the occasion of 19th foundation day, BEE has expanded the coverage by including Energy Efficient “**Deep Freezers**” and “**Light Commercial Air Conditioners (LCAC)**”.
- Through launch of these two new appliances under voluntary regime, 26 appliances would now be covered under this programme. During the event, **Urja Dakshata Information Tool (UDIT)** (www.udit.beeindia.gov.in), a first ever initiative taken by BEE with World Resources Institute (WRI), to facilitate a database on energy e-fficiency was launched.
- UDIT is a user-friendly platform that explains the energy efficiency landscape of India across industry, appliances, building, transport, municipal and agriculture sectors.

Paytm arm gets Irdai brokerage licence

- **Paytm** is set to make a foray into the business of **selling insurance products** with subsidiary **Paytm Insurance Broking** securing a brokerage license from the sector regulator **Insurance Regulatory and Authority of India (IRDAI)**.
- The company plans to offer insurance products across four categories including **auto, health, and life**. Additionally, customers will also be able to avail policy management and claim settlement services at select merchant points, the company stated.
- Paytm which has so far been a marketplace for all insurance products stated it has “recently surrendered” its corporate agency’ license for obtaining the **brokerage license**. The wholly owned subsidiary of Noida based One 97 Communications (PIBL) has already tied up with **20 insurance firms** to roll out these products, with it exploring 30 other such tie-up opportunities, it stated.
- **PhonePe** also announced its foray into insurance after partnering with **Bajaj Allianz** to sell travel insurance policies for customers.

Pine Labs, ZestMoney to offer instant credit, EMI to customers at PoS

- **Pine Labs** has partnered with consumer lending fintech **Zest Money** to provide in-store, **digital equated monthly instalment (EMI)** options to customers. This will be available through Pine Labs’ **Plutus** and **Plutus Smart point-of-sale (PoS) devices**.
- First-time credit seekers who do not have a credit or debit card will be able make purchases at offline stores and avail themselves of EMI.
- As an inaugural time-bound offer, ZestMoney will provide **0 per cent interest EMIs** on the purchase of any product for a three-month tenure. Additionally, the two firms are working with manufacturers across the mobile, consumer durable and laptop categories to bring EMIs with three-, six-, nine- and and 12-months tenures.

Important State Wise National News

[List of Festivals](#)

Festival	Venue	Organized by/Inaugurated By/Others
Ekam Fest	New Delhi	-
Chilli Festival	Madhya Pradesh	Chilli Chaha Moscot launched
Yog Mahotsav (Antar ashtriya Yog Mahatsav'	Rishikesh	Biplab Kumar Deb
3-day Namaste Orchha Festival	Madhya Pradesh	-
Chapchar Kut	Mizoram	-
Fagli Festival	Yangpa of Kinnaur dist, Himachal Pradeh	Victory of good over all
Hola Mohalla	Amristar	--
Phool Dei Festival	Uttarakhand	-
Chaitra Jatra Festival (Cancelled)	Odisha	
Ugadi	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana & Karnataka	

Assam

Assam govt to construct 33 stadiums in state under Uttran scheme

- The **Assam government** to construct **33 stadiums** in the state under **Uttaran scheme**.
- 300 crore rupees will be spent to build the stadiums across the state.
- **500 playgrounds** are being developed at the state to encourage rural talents.
- Also **50 thousand rupees** to be given to **one thousand players** and **2500 clubs** to get a grant of **Rs. 75 thousand**.

Bihar

Bihar government raises India's first tribal women battalion

- The Bihar government raised the country's first tribal women police battalion named the '**Bihar Police Swabhiman Vahini**' with a strength of 675 constables.
- Lauding the Bihar police, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, stated that the empowerment of women in all walks of life is one of the top priorities for the state government "and the country's first '**Bihar Police Swabhiman Vahini**' is a living example of our dedication and commitment to uplift the lives of ST women."
- The passing out parade of this battalion was held at **Patna's Mithilesh stadium**. The parade was headed by a woman constable **Karuna Hansdah** belonging to the **Tharu tribe**.

Chhattisgarh

Baghel presents Rs 95,650-crore budget for Chhattisgarh

- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel presented a Rs 95,650-crore budget, without any new tax proposals, for fiscal 2020-21 in the Legislative Assembly.
- He announced a new scheme, '**Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana**', to provide good returns to farmers for agricultural produce with a provision of Rs 5,100 crore.
- The budget is primarily focused on nutrition, betterment and extension of health services and productive use of the youth's energy to develop them as a powerful resource,
- The budget also embodies the objective '**Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramayah**' (**Let everyone be happy and healthy**)
- Under the '**Krishak Jeevan Jyoti Yojana**', a provision of Rs 2,300 crore has been made for free power supply to agri-pumps upto five Horse Power capacity.
- As many as 1176 biogas plants would be set up under the Gobar Dhan Yojana for which a provision of Rs 450 crore has been made.
- '**Gurukul Vidyalaya**' (residential school) will be set up in Giraudhpuri, the birthplace of spiritual leader Baba Guru Ghasidas.
- Laboratories for the Internet of Things and robotics will be set up at three engineering colleges and five polytechnics in the state.
- **Tuition fees of students** from Chhattisgarh who make it to IITs, IIMs and All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) will be borne by the state government, and on graduation they will be directly recruited in government and semi-government institutions.
- A provision of Rs 7.20 crore has been made for **automated Air Traffic Control (ATC) towers** at Jagdalpur, Ambikapur and Bilaspur airports, while Rs 1 crore is earmarked for construction of air strip at Baikunthpur, Korea district.
- '**Shahid Smarak**' (**martyrs' memorial**) will be built in Nawa Raipur Atal Nagar in the memory of Congress leaders and security personnel killed in the May 2013 Jhiram Valley naxal attack, Baghel announced.
- Overall, the budget for 2020-21 earmarks 38 per cent funds for the social sector, 40 percent for the economic sector and 22 percent for the general service sector.
- Estimated gross expenditure for 2020-21 is Rs 1,02,907 crore. The net expenditure, after deducting repayment of debt and recoveries, is estimated at Rs 95,650 crore.
- Revenue expenditure is estimated at 81,400 crore and capital expenditure at 13,814 crore, 14.44 percent of the total expenditure. Total revenue receipts for year 2020-21 are estimated at Rs 83,831 crore.
- The state is estimated to have surplus revenue of Rs 2,431 crore, as in previous years. Fiscal deficit (which factors in debt repayment liability) is estimated to be Rs 11,518 crore, which is 3.18 percent of the state's estimated gross domestic product (GDP) for 2020-21, little above the prescribed limit of 3 percent.
- Total receipts for 2020-21 are estimated Rs 96,091 crore against estimated expenditure of Rs 95,650 crore.

- Budget deficit is estimated to be 3,522 crore by the end of 2020-21, including estimated budget deficit of Rs 3,963 crore for 2019-20.

Delhi

Delhi Metro to conduct online Customer satisfaction survey

- The **Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)** is going to conduct an online 'Customer Satisfaction Survey' through its official website – www.delhimetrorail.com from 28th April to 25th May, 2014 to get feedback from the commuters on various aspects related to metro functioning.
- This particular survey will be unique in nature as, similar customer satisfaction surveys will also be simultaneously conducted by many other Metro systems across the world. The two main organizations of Metro systems globally – **CoMET** and **NOVA** (of which DMRC is a member), have come together to conduct this survey.
- This will be the first time, when DMRC will conduct an online survey. Another customer satisfaction survey was conducted last year by DMRC during which responses were collected from the commuters at the stations. Based on the responses, a slew of changes were introduced to the system related to aspects such as availability of drinking water, improvement in quality of smart cards and tokens, toilet facility, parking arrangements, facilities for the differently abled and elderly etc.

Rs 100-cr scheme announced to make Delhi tourism brand

- The **Delhi government** announced a **Rs 100-crore scheme** to introduce the national capital as a tourism brand to domestic and foreign tourists and create new jobs in the sector.
- Under the new scheme "**Branding Delhi**", Delhi tourism will be re-branded and the city will be introduced as a tourism brand in the country and abroad to domestic and foreign tourists.
- The AAP government also proposed "Campaign for Communal Harmony" in the wake of the recent violence in northeast Delhi that left 53 dead and over 200 injured.
- **Delhi Ki Diwali**" will be celebrated this year too. Also, a new festival called "**PurvanchalUtsav**" is proposed to be celebrated

Scheme for triggering behavioral change launched by Delhi govt

- The ArvindKejriwal government announced a **Rs 20 crore-scheme** to trigger behavioral change and make Delhi **safer for women**.
- The government also proposed "**MukhyamantriDivyangjanPunravasSewaYojana**", with an outlay of **Rs 10 crore**, to **provide immediate treatment in cases of accident**, stroke or any other ailment, and accident causing permanent or partial disabilities.
- A new scheme "**Behavioural Change for Safety of the Women**" is proposed with an outlay of **Rs 20 crore** in 2020-21 for awareness campaign to trigger behaviour change in the society.
- The government has also set aside **Rs 100 crore** for the "**Jai BhimMukhyamantriPratibhaYojana**", under which ST/OBC/EWS category students **get free coaching for competitive examination** through 46 empanelled coaching institutes.

- The government also earmarked **150 crore** for a new scheme "**MukhyamantriVidhyarthiPratibhaYojana**", under which SC/ST/OBC/minority students from **class 9 and class 10** with minimum **50 per cent marks** in the previous year will be given a **scholarship amount of Rs 5,000 per year**.
- The students of **class 11 and class 12** with minimum 60 percent marks in previous year will be given **Rs 10,000 per annum**.
- The government allocated **Rs 100 crore** for its widely-acclaimed "**MukhyaMantriThirathYatra**" scheme, under which **free pilgrimage tours** to various places of religious importance are organised for senior citizens.
- Also announced a **Rs 10-crore "Delhi DarshanYojana"** for the **elderly to visit various tourist destinations** within the city.
- Registered and practicing advocates in Delhi will be given mediclaim policy, group insurance policy, e-library and crèche facilities under the Chief Minister **Advocate Welfare Fund scheme**, for which, **Rs 50 crore** has been proposed in the Budget 2020-21.

Karnataka

Karnataka government launches 'Namaste over Handshake' campaign to tackle spread of COVID-19

- The **Karnataka government** started a campaign called '**Namaste over Handshake**' that encourages people to greet in the traditional Indian style, to tackle the spread of coronavirus.
- The campaign also includes health advice on how people can protect themselves from the infection by adopting hygiene practices such as regularly washing hands to prevent the spread of **COVID-19**.
- As part of the campaign, the state health and family welfare department has uploaded a poster on the social media, featuring a '**Bharatnatyam**' dancer draped in a red saree **saying 'Namaste'**.
- The poster has health helpline numbers (**104 and 011-23978046**) for public queries on the viral disease, which has claimed 4,251 lives worldwide.
- People should adopt 'Namaste' or 'Namaskara' to greet people instead of handshakes or hugs.

CII Karnataka sets up task force to work with state government

- A **high-level delegation** of **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Karnataka**, led by Chairman Sandeep Singh and Vice Chairman Ramesh Ramudarai, met Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka, TM Vijay Bhaskar, and assured the support of the industry to the government in its fight against the spread of Covid-19 in the state.
- CII has created a task force to work closely with the state government on the reduction in spread of **Covid-19** and assured its support on the ground, in the form of donations of medicines, personal protective gear, diagnostic test kits, and financial support.
- The state government, along with industry, have been proactively making all efforts to understand the requirements and the support needed.
- A report on industry recommendations which outlines the impact on each sector and possible steps to address the challenges has been shared with the Karnataka Department of Industries & Commerce.

- A meeting for e-commerce companies was conducted with the commissioner industries to understand their modus operandi and help them operate during these tough times.
- CII has been extending help to the companies covered under exempted items to facilitate their movement across the state and has also set up a fund for MSMEs to tackle the situation arising out of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Goa

Goa govt launches chatbot to create awareness about coronavirus

- **Goa Health Minister Vishwajit P Rane** has launched a chatbot **Cobot-19** to create **awareness about coronavirus among the citizens**.
- The first state in the country to take up an initiative at this scale and our aim is to resolve the confusion caused by countless advisories from different sources as well as rumors.
- The Chatbot has been developed in association with **Portea Medical and Verloop**.
- Cobot-19 will act as a one-stop source of information for citizens of Goa on COVID-19 and its various aspects

Gujarat

India's first flying car factory to come up in Gujarat

- **PAL-V stands for Personal Air Land Vehicle** and the company will set-up a **new manufacturing facility in Gujarat**
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the state's Principal Secretary MK Das and Carlo Maasbommel, Vice-President, International Business Development Division, PAL-V.
- The government will help the Dutch company to get all the necessary approvals to set-up the plant in Gujarat. The production facility and the assembly lines are expected to be operational from **2021**.
- The PAL-V has developed the **world's first commercial flying car**. The company is already accepting bookings for the car and all the cars that they are planning to make for this year have been booked and sold.
- The PAL-V Liberty is the car that is expected to be launched in India in 2021. It is a three-wheel vehicle that has rotors on the roof and tail like the helicopters. The car can be driven like a normal car on the roads. In this mode, the wings of the car move inwards and fold. The wings can be extended whenever the user wants to take a flight and jump the traffic jam. According to the company, it takes about 5-10 mins to do the conversion.

Haryana

Haryana's Amin village is now Abhimanyupur

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has given its approval to a proposal of the **Haryana** Government to rename **Amin village in Kurukshetra district to Abhimanyupur**.
- The MHA gives its approval to the change of name of any place after taking no-objections from the **Ministry of Railways, Department of Posts and Survey of India**.
- These organisations have to confirm that there is no such city, town or village in their records with a name similar to the proposed one.

- The exercise of changing the name of a village or town or a city could be done through an executive order, while adding that in case of renaming a state, the government would require an amendment in the Constitution with a simple majority in Parliament.

Himachal Pradesh

Himachal govt launches Police Station Visitor Survey System and e-Night Beat Checking System

- **Himachal Pradesh State government** launched **Police Station Visitor Survey System** and **e-Night Beat Checking System** for Himachal police in **Shimla**.
- These systems would help the Police Department in doing self-evaluation and improve the working of Police.
- This systems would be able to get proper feedback regarding their working and take necessary steps for improving their functioning.
- Police Station Visitor Survey System will be linked with <http://bit.ly/HPPolice>. This system would be used for the surveillance of visitors visiting the Police Stations, Police Posts and all other police units and would help in creating a database of visitors. All the visitors/complainants visiting the Police Stations, Police Posts or traffic units would be requested to fill the survey link.
- **Jai Ram Thakur** also launched the **Night Beat Checking system for the Police Department** which would be linked with <http://bit.ly/eNight>. This would help the State Police to keep a track of the suspected vehicles and criminals who move in the night.
- The main feature of the System was that it would automatically capture the date, time and GPS Location of the policeman on beat patrolling/night checking duty and thus would help in ensuring the increased presence of police on the roads for better safety of the citizens.

Himachal Pradesh govt to launch Active Case Finding Campaign for COVID 19 patients

- **Himachal Pradesh government** will launch **Active Case Finding Campaign** for COVID 19 patients. Under this campaign, health workers would provide information regarding symptoms of Covid-19 to the people at their doorsteps.
- Under the Active Case Finding Campaign, every **ASHA worker** with two person's team will visit every house in the village and gather health information of every person and would share it with the department through Google form.
- The timing for gathering information would start from 9 AM to 4 PM every day and the suspected persons would be investigated accordingly.
- The Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur stated elected representatives of Panchayat Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies must be involved to identify persons in their respective areas who have intra or even interstate traveling history.

- Chief Minister also directed the officers to extend all possible facilities to the people kept under quarantine centers. He stated efforts should be made to identify some hotels, guest houses and Dharamshalas for keeping the people under quarantine.

Kerala

Kerala High Court bans all forms of agitations in schools, colleges

- The **Kerala High Court** banned all forms of **agitations by student groups in school and college campuses** in the state that disrupt the functioning of educational institutions.
- Banning various forms agitations like gherao and sit-in in the campuses, the High Court also stated no one can be persuaded to participate in such protests.
- The court had earlier voiced its disapproval to political activities like dharna and strikes in educational institutions.

Kerala govt orders poultry culling after bird flu in Parappanangadi

- Kerala government ordered the poultry culling in Parappanangadi in the backdrop of bird flu.
- Special squads have been deployed to cull all poultry within a one-kilometre radius of the epicenter.
- Two avian influenza incidents were reported at Kodiathoor and Vengeri villages in the state.

Kerala to launch digital literacy drive 'I am also digital'

- **Kerala** is all set to launch a massive **total digital literacy campaign** to ensure that the benefits of the state's surge as an inclusive knowledge-based society reaches the grass roots level.
- The drive, powered by the Kerala State IT Mission under the Department of Information Technology and Kerala Literacy Mission, is titled as **'I am also digital.'**
- The campaign would seek to create public awareness about e-governance and equip them to make use of various digital platforms through which a wide array of services are being delivered.
- The ambitious project will be pilot-launched in **Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation** soon, starting with selection of 50 master trainees having sound basic knowledge of handling online IT tools.

Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

Historic City Chowk in Jammu renamed as 'Bharat Mata Chowk'

- The historic City **Chowk**, the commercial hub in old Jammu, was renamed as **'Bharat Mata Chowk'** following the passage of a resolution by the general house of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC).
- This place is historic and a witness to major decisions and protests in the past. Every year people are hoisting the tricolour on Republic and Independence days in this chowk. There was a popular demand from the public to rename this chowk as Bharat Mata Chowk

J&K govt constitutes commission for welfare of socially, educationally backward classes

- **Jammu and Kashmir** government has constituted a commission for socially and educationally backward classes in the union territory. It will look into the issues of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the J&K.

- Justice **GD Sharma** has been appointed as **chairperson**, and former **IFS Rup Lal Bharti** and **IPS officer Munir Ahmed Khan** as members of the commission.
- The commission will determine the criteria to be adopted in considering any section of the people in Jammu and Kashmir as Socially and Educationally Backward Class

J&K announces Rs 5L free health insurance for residents

- In a major relief to the people of **Jammu & Kashmir**, the **LG Girish Chander Murmu** accorded sanction to roll out the Jammu & Kashmir Health Scheme to provide free of cost **Universal Health Coverage to all residents of the Union Territory in convergence with Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY**.
- At present, 5.95 lakh families are eligible for benefits under Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY. Around 15 lakh additional families will be covered under the Jammu & Kashmir Health Scheme.
- Under this Universal Health Coverage, the beneficiaries shall be entitled to free health insurance cover of **Rs 5 lakh per family per year** on floater basis and there is no restriction on family size, age or gender.
- All employees, pensioners and their family members are also covered under the scheme. The employees shall continue to get Rs 300 per month as medical allowances for OPD (Outpatient Department) treatment.

J&K Lt Governor Launches 'Student Health Card' Scheme for over 12 lakh students

- In a move aimed at improving the health and overall well being of over 12 lakh students of government schools in **Jammu and Kashmir**, **Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu** launched the **Student Health Card scheme**.
- These cards will contain information about the immunisation record of a child, the bi-annual examination of a child, the checklist of commonly existing disorders among children and their preliminary diagnostic tools, tabular description of periodic health profile matrices and a brief description of commonly occurring diseases and ailments among children.

32 lakh saplings planted so far under "Green J&K" program

- Jammu and Kashmir Forest Department, under the "**Green J&K**" program, from its given target of one crore saplings, has so far planted **32 lakh saplings** of various varieties across the Union Territory. The drive was part of national initiative for enhancing the green cover across the country.
- On the occasion, various saplings of **Deodar** and **Kail** were planted by the officials of the forest department. It was further informed that by the end of March, the department will ensure that 18 lakh more saplings are planted to take the total number to 50 lakhs.

Student Health Card scheme for school children launched in J&K

- In Jammu and Kashmir, Lt. Governor G.C. Murmu launched **Student Health Card scheme** in **Jammu**. In his address Lt. Gov. stated that MidDay meal was launched for the needy school going children so that malnutrition can be prevented. He stated that now Student Health card scheme will also prove to be very beneficial because it will ensure regular checkup of school going children.

- The regular health checkup facility at school level will ensure good health of students. He further stated that the aim of this scheme is to ensure good health of every school going children and parents should be made aware about the benefits of this scheme.

Madhya Pradesh

Centre declares National Chambal Sanctuary in MP as eco-sensitive zone

- The Centre declared the **National Chambal Sanctuary** in **Madhya Pradesh**, home to **gangetic dolphins** and 75 per cent population of critically endangered species **gharial**, as **eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)**.
- The sanctuary also harbours national aquatic animal the fresh water gangetic dolphins, nine species of fresh water turtles and more the 180 species of migratory birds.
- Spread over 435 square kilometres, the National Chambal Sanctuary lies across Sheopur, Morena and Bind districts of Madhya Pradesh with a length of more than 400 kilometers.
- Madhya Pradesh government to prepare a Zonal Master Plan, which shall provide for restoration of denuded areas, conservation of existing water bodies, management of catchment areas, watershed management, groundwater management, soil and moisture conservation, needs of local community and such other aspects of the ecology and environment that need attention.
- The government **prohibited any new construction** of hotels and resorts within **one kilometre** from the **boundary of the wildlife sanctuary** or up to the extent of the ESZ.

Maharashtra

Mumbai Central station is about to get a new name Nana Shankarseth Terminus Station

- Two Mumbai icons are getting new names. **Dadar's Shivaji Park ground** has been renamed the **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park** in deference to the Maratha warrior king, while the **Mumbai Central train station** will be likely called **Nana Shankarseth Terminus Station**.
- Mumbai Central was earlier known as Bombay Central before which it was known as Bellasis Road Station.

Maharashtra govt approves implementation of "happy hour" for autorickshaws

- **Maharashtra government** has approved the implementation of **"happy hour"** for autorickshaws as recommended by Khatua panel.
- **The fares will be slashed by 15 percent between 12 noon and 4 pm.** The decision will however **not be applicable to local taxis and app based taxis.**
- The new concept will turn lean hours to happy hours, especially for housewives and senior citizens who normally don't have a fixed schedule for their outings. While citizens are pleased with the move, autorickshaw unions have indicated that they will oppose the move.

Mumbai Metro Line-III gets Rs 2,480 crore loan from JICA

- **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** has signed an agreement with the central government to provide an official development assistance (ODA) loan of **39,928 million yen (around Rs 2,480 crore)** for **Mumbai Metro Line-III**.

- The ODA loan agreement was signed between the finance ministry and Katsuo Matsumoto, the chief representative of JICA in India.
- With a total of 33.7 km, entailing 26 stations, the Line-III or the Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ line is planned to connect southern part of the city with the major activity areas like Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC), the airport, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation area and SEEPZ area. The fully underground project is scheduled for completion by 2021.
- Overall, JICA has so far extended concessional ODA loans worth over **1 trillion yen** (around Rs 60,000 crore) for the development of metro systems in **New Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai** and **Ahmedabad**.

Maharashtra to stamp people in home quarantine

- Maharashtra government decided to '**stamp**' all those people who have been sent to 100 per cent '**home quarantine**' in view of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Accordingly, the left hand of all persons shunted to 100 per cent home quarantine will be stamped to identify them easily if they mingle with the general public.
- The decision, taken at a meeting of top officials chaired by Chief Minister **Uddhav Thackeray**, has been described as a precautionary measure after 39 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in the state - highest in India - and around seven suspected patients had fled from treatment centres.
- Greater Mumbai's Municipal Commissioner Pravin Pardeshi issued an order to all officials concerned at hospitals and the airport, asking them to 'stamp' behind the left palm of the home quarantined person concerned, the dates of isolation, with ink that would last for 14 days.

Manipur

Manipur CM announces scheme for welfare of sportspersons and artists

- **Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh** has announced the biggest ever scheme for the **welfare of sports persons and artists of the State**.
- The announcement was made during **third-anniversary celebrations of the BJP led government in Manipur at Imphal**.
- '**Chief Minister's Akhannaba Sanaroising gi Tengbang (CMAST)**' and **Chief Minister Artist Sing gi Tengbang (CMAT)**' would provide benefits to thousands of sportspersons and artistes of the State who have brought laurels to the State and Country.
- Under the **CMAST Scheme**, a suitable employment in government services will be provided to sports persons, who have won medals in notified disciplines in selected International Sports events. The scheme would also support the sports persons on purchasing of costly sports items. Also, cash awards for Olympic participants have been enhanced to 1 crore, 75 lakh, 50 lakh and 10 lakh rupees for different categories. Sportsperson who have represented in National and International tournaments and are unemployed would be given lifetime pension.

- In scheme for artists, **CMAT** is designed with a view to encourage the artists in different fields and targeted to cover 4000 artistes in a year.
- **Pension** will be given to **selected artists who are 60 years and above**. Monetary support would be extended to cultural groups or institutes for training and productions in various fields of arts and culture. **Financial assistance** will also be provided to the **students studying in government dance and music institutes in Manipur**.

Meghalaya

Meghalaya to invest Rs 450 crore for development of sports

- Meghalaya Chief Minister **Conrad Sangma** has stated that his government will invest **Rs 450 crore** for development of sports infrastructure in the state.
- He stated the government has already taken the initiative to upgrade the **PA Sangma stadium** in **Tura** into an integrated sports complex. It will be a state of the art facility dedicated exclusively to **football**.
- He stated the government plans to develop football in the state and steps are being taken to create an international level football academy in Shillong to nurture the talents of young boys and girls to skill them professionally in the sport.
- Meghalaya government's investment in sports infrastructure is also part of its plan to host the **National Games 2022**

Odisha

Odisha to have separate dept for SHGs dedicated to women "Mission Shakti"

- **Odisha** will be the first state to have an exclusive **department for Self Help Group (SHGs)** called "**Mission Shakti**" and it will be dedicated to all women of the state, announced Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in Bhubaneswar.
- Focusing on the welfare and development of the women, the state government has introduced an independent Nutrition Budget focusing on Mother-Child nutrition.

Punjab

Punjab prohibits online supply of food from FBOs not possessing hygiene rating

- **Punjab** Food & Drug Administration prohibits online supply of food from FBOs not possessing hygiene rating.
- Ban also applicable on FBOs having less than three marks in hygiene rating.
- Prohibition on OFSAs which supply food from unrated FBO.
- Exercising the powers conferred under **section 30(2)(a) of Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006**, read with **section 18(1)(a) of Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006**, in the interest of public health, the distribution /supply/sale of articles of food through Online Food Supply Aggregators (OFSAs) related to those Food Business Operators (FBOs) who have not got their hygiene rating done, has been prohibited.
- The prohibition orders would be effective in the entire state of Punjab for the period of one year with effect from 30th April 2020.

Rajasthan

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla launches 'Suposhit Maa Abhiyaan' in Kota

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has stated that society should also come forward to remove malnutrition problems in the country. Mr. Birla was addressing the program after launching the '**Suposhit Maa Abhiyaan**' in his constituency **Kota**.
- Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani was also present in the program. Mr. Birla appealed to every section of the society to cooperate in the malnutrition-free India campaign.
- Smt. Smriti Irani stated that for the first time more than **9 thousand crores** have been allocated for the nutrition campaign in the country. She stated that **Poshan Abhiyaan** needs to be made a mass movement.

Rajasthan government hikes dearness allowance for employees, pensioners to 17 per cent

- The **Rajasthan government** increased the **dearness allowance** for its employees to **17 per cent** from the existing **12 per cent**. The revised allowance will be effective from July 1, 2019, according to an order of the finance department.
- About 8 lakh employees and 4.40 lakh pensioners will be benefited from this increase. The state government will incur an additional financial burden of about **Rs 3,417 crore** in 2020-21.
- The amount of increase in dearness allowance (DA) for the period from July 1, 2019, to February 2, 2020, shall be credited to the general provident fund account of the employees in April 2020 and cash payment shall be admissible from March 1.
- As per the order, the arrear of DA from July 1, 2019, to February 29, 2020, to the employees recruited to the civil services on or after January 1, 2004, and who are governed by the Contributory Pension Scheme shall be paid in April 2020 and cash payment shall be admissible from March 1, 2020.

Rajasthan Police start giving permit on app for movement during lockdown

- **Rajasthan police** launched a mobile app to enable individuals and company employees in the state take permission for venturing out in necessary conditions.
- The **RajCopcitizens app** has been launched on Android Play Store in English but every day it will be modified to suit the need of people especially those at the bottom of the pyramid.
- The developer of the app **Data Ingenious Global Limited** has been launched to address the immediate need of the people during the lockdown and its team is working from home to bring changes that will be asked by the government.

Jaipur's Sawai Man Singh hospital tests serving robot

- The **Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Government Hospital** in Jaipur is conducting a series of trials on a **humanoid robot** to check if could be pressed into service for delivering medicines and food to the **COVID-19** patients admitted there, helping to keep the doctors and nursing staff at a safe distance to protect them against the dreaded coronavirus.
- A Jaipur-based entrepreneur, manufacturing robots indigenously at his assembling unit, has offered to supply them free of cost to the hospital as part of a **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** initiative to help out both the patients and the staff. The robot sent to the hospital is battery-operated and has a life span of four to five years.

- The **humanoid robot**, which uses artificial intelligence and Internet of Things (IoT), has been designed with a tray which can be used for carrying medicines, food and other objects to the assigned patients. It can navigate its own way without the instructions to follow lines on the floor.

Tamil Nadu

TN launches Rs 2,857 cr health system reform programme

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami launched the **Rs 2,857 crore Tamil Nadu Health System Reform Programme (TNHSRP)**.
- The programme, supported by the **World Bank** at an estimated cost of **USD 410 million**, roughly Rs 2,857 crore.
- The five-year programme focusses on three key areas -- improved quality of care, management of non-communicable diseases & injuries, and reduced equity gaps in reproductive and child health.
- Under the programme, quality certification of the government hospitals will also be undertaken, which will help improve the medical service.
- It will focus on diagnosing non-communicable diseases, like diabetes, cancer, blood pressure, breast cancer and psychological disorders at an early stage.

'Modi Kitchen' begins in Kovai, Tamil Nadu

- A 'Modi Kitchen' with a capacity to serve 500 meals every day has started functioning in Kovai (Coimbatore).
- The kitchen, based near Cross Cut road, one of the main shopping areas of the city, has made arrangements to deliver food parcels within a radius of 10 kms too.
- The assorted parcels include a main dish, two kinds of side dishes and a sweet. The dishes are prepared under advice from nutrition experts.
- The functionaries of the Common Service Centre, which has organised the kitchen and they plan to provide the service till April 14th.

TN CM declares sanitary personnel as "cleanliness workers"

- **Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami** announced that 64,583 **sanitary personnel** employed by urban and rural civic bodies in the State will from now on be called "**cleanliness workers**" to honour their work.
- Periodic health check-ups, special employment camps and skill development for the children of health workers were also being carried out.
- To honour the work of these personnel and in deference to their long-time demand, all sanitary workers will from now be called as cleanliness workers (**Thooimai paniyalargal in Tamil**).
- As many as 64,583 sanitary workers are employed with 15 corporations, 121 municipalities, 528 town panchayats and 12,525 village panchayats.
- Energy department to install smart meters for 42 lakh electricity consumers here to compute their power consumption will be implemented at an outlay of Rs 4,300 crore.
- He also announced other schemes to develop the power distribution infrastructure to meet the increasing demand at an estimated total cost of Rs 1,998 crore.

- Such plans include upgradation of a 230 KV (Kilovolt) sub-station at Alagarkoil in Madurai district into a 400 kv station and enhancing two 110 kv sub-stations into 230 kv facilities.

38th district to be formed in Tamil Nadu

- In Tamil Nadu, a new district is going to be formed after bifurcating the Nagappattinam district.
- The new district will be headquartered at **Mayiladuthurai**, in the heart of the Delta region.
- It would be the **38th district in the state**

Telangana

GMR Hyderabad International Airport goes Single-Use Plastic-free

- **GMR Hyderabad International Airport** has declared itself as a **Single-Use Plastic (SUP)-free** airport from March 1, 2020, and zero tolerance on use of such material has been imposed across the airport.
- This includes all concessionaires and service providers operating at the airport. This initiative is in line with the government's campaign to phase out SUP by **2022**.
- The airport had been steadily phasing out the use of non-recyclable plastic over the past few years. And in the final phase, the '**Single-Use Plastic Free Airport**' campaign was initiated in February 2020, during which the airport stakeholders, like the food & beverage (F&B) outlets, fully switched over to sustainable eco-friendly alternatives like corn starch plates, wooden spoons and forks, while retailers started using only biodegradable boxes and covers to reduce the airport's plastic footprint.
- Hyderabad International Airport has also been encouraging eco-friendly products like jute bags through its **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** arm **GMR Varalakshmi Foundation (GMRVF)**

Tripura

Tripura government to provide Rs 5000 to eligible students for buying smartphone

- The **Tripura government** has decided to provide **Rs 5000** to **14,608 students** of the final year of the undergraduate level for buying Smartphone, a senior state minister stated .
- We have selected 14,608 students in the final year of undergraduate level in 38 educational institutions which include 22 government degree colleges of the state. They will be given Rs 5,000 each under the '**Mukhyamantri Yuba Yogayog Yojana**' scheme for buying a smartphone. The money would be directly sent to their bank accounts, he added.
- He stated, smartphone is helpful in opening up huge opportunities for developing skills, finding resources to enhance knowledge and availing employment opportunities.
- Nath stated the scheme will be implemented from the financial year 2020-2021 and the benefit would be once in a lifetime. He added a total of **Rs 7.30 crore** would be spent on the scheme.

Uttarakhand

Gairsain function as the summer capital of Uttarakhand

- Uttarakhand will now have two capitals, with **Gairsain** as the **summer capital**. The decision came from **CM Trivendra Singh Rawat** in the state assembly.

- Gairsain, located in **Chamoli district** between the Kumaon and Garhwal regions, will function as the summer capital.
- The state's current **winter capital** is **Dehradun**.

Uttarakhand Government Abolishes Quota In Promotion For Govt Employees

- **Uttarakhand government** abolished reservation in promotion in the state government jobs.
- The **Trivendra Rawat** government took the major decision on completion of three years of its tenure.
- Following the state government's order, the employees from the General-OBC categories ended their strike.
- The state government also issued orders regarding departmental promotion committee (DPC).

Uttarakhand first state in country to measure Gross Environment Product

- **Uttarakhand** state is going to become the first state of the country to measure **Gross Environment Product (GEP)** for quantifying ecological growth measurement. A five-member committee in this regard has already been formed which is headed by the principal secretary of forests, Uttarakhand.
- **Anil Prakash Joshi**, a Padma awardee environmentalist, the man behind the concept has been advocating the implementation of the idea across the country especially in the Himalayas for years.
- According to a Greenpeace report released in January 2020, Dehradun is almost 11 times more polluted than prescribed standards of World Health Organization standards and worse than Kanpur.

Dehradun Railway Station introduces signage in Braille

- **Dehradun Railway Station** has become friendly for visually challenged persons with the introduction of **signages and maps in Braille**.
- Arun Prakash, Divisional Railway Manager stated, **Dehradun Railway Station** has been made friendly for the visually challenged. The CSR funds of a private company funded this project. Everywhere instructions have been put up in Braille so that the visually challenged persons can understand.
- The Railway department along with an NGO, Anuprayas, took the initiative. Now visually challenged people can easily reach the inquiry desk, refreshment room and other places at the station due to the instructions that have been put up in Braille, he added

Uttar Pradesh

UP govt announces one month free food grains to poor; Rs 1,000 as compensation to daily wagers

- **Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** has announced to provide **one month free food grains to poor people** along with **Rs 1,000 as compensation to daily wage workers** who have been affected **due to the outbreak of deadly virus**.
- One crore 65 lakh needy poor people will be provided one month food stuff including 20 kilograms flour free of cost.
- People under **old age pension, Divyang pension and widows and poor people pension** will be given **two months advance**.
- Owners of schools, Malls, restaurants and hotels and other institutions have been asked to provide appropriate payments to the effected labourers.

Uttar Pradesh govt to transfer Rs 611 crore in accounts of 27.15 lakh MNREGA labourers

- Uttar Pradesh **Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** will transfer **611 crore rupees** in the accounts of **27.15 lakh MNREGA labourers**. The amount will be transferred electronically to help the labourers in the situation of Lock down due to Corona Virus.
- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed private enterprises and organisations to must give one month salary to their employees without any deduction.
- State Government reiterated that nodal officers in 16 states of the country are helping the people of Uttar Pradesh in their respective areas and appealed everyone to remain wherever they are and follow the lock down.
- Meanwhile, Gautam Buddh Nagar administration took over the JP sports city to convert it into the shelter home for the labourers.

UP CM constitutes 'Team-11' to beat corona

- UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has set up "**Team-11**" comprising of as many inter-departmental committees to fight the coronavirus spread and its multi-lateral fallouts on multiple fronts ranging from ensuring medicare to victims to the supply of essentials and tackle long marches of jobless workers back home.
- Each of the committees will be headed by a senior bureaucrat of the state while the the **chief minister** himself will be the **head of the Team 11**, an official statement stated.
- The CM has constituted "Team- 11" to monitor the situation arising out of the coronavirus spread as per the specific responsibilities assigned to them, Additional Chief Secretary (Information) Awanish Awasthi stated.
- He has formed 11 inter-departmental committees with over two dozen senior government officials working at crucial levels under the CM's supervision, he added.

UP govt seeks Central Grant of Rs. 100 cr for Lucknow University & Kashi Vidyapeeth

- The **Uttar Pradesh Government** has sought a Central Grant of **100 crore rupees** for **Lucknow University and Kashi Vidyapeeth**.
- The Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister of Uttar Pradesh Mr. Sharma stated that both the educational institutions have completed 100 years of their establishment and there is a provision of special grant of Rs 100 crores for these institutions.

UP govt launches schemes for skill development & employment generation for youths

- **Uttar Pradesh government** has launched three ambitious schemes for skill development and employment generation for youths in the state and also announced to depute "**Arogya Mitras**" at all primary health centres to inform people about govt health schemes.
- Launching three schemes **Kaushal Satrang, Yuva Hub and apprenticeship scheme** in Lucknow.
- **Kaushal Satrang** will have seven components which **will provide opportunities to the youth**.
- Last month, the '**Yuva Hub**' scheme was allocated **Rs 1,200 crore** in the state budget and it aims at providing employment to thousands of skilled youth by assisting in project concept and financial help for one year of operation. CM Yuva HUB will also facilitate setting up of 30,000 startups in state while **CM apprenticeship scheme** will provide stipend of **Rs 2500 to the youth of state**

UP govt announces Rs 900 per month for stray cattle upkeep

- The **Uttar Pradesh** government has announced a grant of **₹900 per month** for the **upkeep of a stray cow to individuals who look after any such animal**.
- The government feels that the announcement will help end the traffic menace caused by stray cattle roaming freely on roads, besides their proper care.
- Noida has two cow shelters and Greater Noida has one, which are inadequate to take care of stray cattle in the district.
- Medicines and vaccines are being sent to every district to eradicate common diseases in cattle and all of them will undergo ear-tagging so that it is known which animal has not received the medicine.
- A scheme called “**Nirashrit/Besahara Govansh Sahbhagita scheme** (stray cattle scheme)” was approved by the state Cabinet in its meeting chaired by CM Yogi Adityanath.

India's biggest multi-level parking to come up in Noida

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated and laid foundation stones for 23 development projects worth **Rs 2,821 crore** in **Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida**.
- The initiative is part of the state government to develop the Gautam Buddha Nagar City as a smart city and ideal model of development and opportunities.
- Among the 23 projects, 13 projects were inaugurated at the total worth of Rs 1,452 crore, while foundation stones were laid for 10 projects worth Rs 1,369 crore.
- India's biggest multi-level parking with space for 7,000 vehicles at Sector 38A – Rs 500 crore
- Underground parking for 276 cars and 42 two-wheelers at Sector 5 – Rs 32.25 crore
- A government hospital in Sector 39 – Rs 344 crore
- Three power sub stations at Sector 148 – Rs 366 crore
- Two power sub stations at Sector 38A – Rs 98.45 crore and Rs 10 crore
- A footover bridge at Sector 145 metro station – Rs 10.81 crore
- Sector 62 – Rs 5 crore
- Sector 71 and 72 – Rs 5 crore
- Four pink toilets in sectors 16, 15, 28 and 74 – Rs 0.76 crore

Jewar airport gets international recognition for strategic infrastructure

- In a major achievement for Uttar Pradesh's Yogi Adityanath government, the first phase of **Jewar airport** has been included in the **world's 100 strategic global infrastructure projects for the year 2020**.
- **Uttar Pradesh (India)** and **Yugoslavia** have been chosen in the **field of aviation** all over the world. It has been recognised in the **CG LA Infrastructure list**.
- The success story of Jewar Airport will be presented by the Uttar Pradesh government at the **13th Global Infrastructure Leadership Forum**, to be held in **New York City, US** on March 25-27.

- The airport, being built by Zurich Airport International AG, will be Asia's second largest international airport after China's Shanghai International Airport.
- This airport will be the **5th largest airport in the world**. The work on the airport in Jewar, Greater Noida, on about 5000 hectares of land, is going on at a rapid pace. According to the proposal, flights will start operating in 2022-23.
- The Jewar Greenfield International Airport will boost industrial development in the state. The government is expected to earn more than Rs 1.10 lakh crore from this project, being built with an investment of Rs 30,000 crore.

West Bengal

West Bengal to have Rs 200 crore fund to tackle coronavirus, says Mamata Banerjee

- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced the **State government** will create a **₹200 crore** fund to tackle the coronavirus outbreak. She also announced that all educational institutions will be closed till April 15.
- Around **3.24 lakh people** have been screened in Bengal, and we are keeping a close watch on 5,590 of them. Till now there have been no positive cases in the state, she stated after reviewing the situation arising out of the coronavirus pandemic.
- As a precautionary measure, the government has decided to extend the closure of all educational institutes till April 15, the chief minister added. The state government had ordered educational institutions to remain shut till March 30.

West Bengal Govt extends insurance coverage of Care givers to COVID-19 patients to Rs 10 lakh

- The **West Bengal Government** has decided to extend **insurance coverage of Care givers** to COVID-19 patients from **5 lakh rupees to 10 lakh rupees**. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced this during an administrative review meeting with DMs and SPs through video Conferencing from Secretariat this afternoon.
- The West Bengal Government has directed the district administrations to open isolation and quarantine wards at different places away from Hospitals to contain the spread of Corona. The State Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took stock of the situation with District administrations through Video conferencing.

Bengal releases helpline number for children suffering from stress amid lockdown

- **West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR)** has launched a helpline number through which psychiatrists and paediatricians would provide consultation to children for free.
- According to the Chairperson of the WBCPCR, Ananya Chatterjee Chakraborti, the commission has started a helpline with a team of **17 psychiatrists, paediatricians, counsellors and psychologists** to help the children who are under stress due to lockdown.
- This has been done to help the children, who are suffering from boredom for being locked up at their houses due to this shutdown, Chakraborti stated.
- This helpline will help both the children and their parents to deal with such situations, she stated. The mobile numbers of each consultant and time slot have been given in the list published by the commission.

Assam govt decides to provide Rs 1000 each to 2.78 Lakh construction workers; MP Govt transfers Rs 88 cr to accounts of registered construction workers

- The **Assam government** has decided to provide **1 thousand rupees each to 2.78 lakh construction workers** who had to suffer due to lockdown.
- The meeting also decided to give **free rice** to around 58 lakh BPL households from 1st of next month. It was further decided that poor households without National Food Security Act and ration cards would get one time financial help of 1 thousand rupees.
- **Madhya Pradesh government** has transferred around **88 crore rupees in the accounts of registered construction workers** of the state.

Recent Schemes Launched by Various States in India for COVID 19

- **Goa** became first Indian state to launch a **digital self-assessment test** for COVID-19 to help people to identify whether they are at risk of being infected by novel coronavirus without having to physically visit a healthcare facility. The self-assessment tool called **Test Yourself Goa**.
- The **Tamil Nadu government** has announced a **Rs3, 280-crore coronavirus relief package**. This includes financial support of **Rs1,000** to all ration card holders; and also free rice, cooking oil, sugar and other essential commodities.
- Palaniswami stated registered hawkers, autorickshaw drivers and construction workers will also get a special assistance of **Rs1,000**. Migrant labourers, construction workers and autorickshaw drivers will get 15 kg rice, 1 kg dal and cooking oil for free
- **Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik** launched **Mo Jeeban programme** and urged people to take a pledge to stay indoors.
- **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** has announced to provide **one month free food grains** to poor people along with **Rs 1,000** as compensation to daily wage workers who have been affected due to the outbreak of deadly virus. People under old age pension, Divyang pension and widows and poor people. Pension will be given two months advance.

Relief Packages for CORONA outbreak from different States

- **Indore**, India's cleanest city, has opted to deploy drones to sprinkle chemicals in a bid to **sanitise** it against the **coronavirus outbreak**.
- The **Indore Municipal Corporation** has hired **two drones** from a private company, making it perhaps the **first city in India** to attempt to fight off the virus scare this way.
- **Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren** government has decided to provide two months ration in advance to the beneficiaries of the public distribution system.
- Also launched an app - **VeggiGo** - for people to place order for essential commodities.
- The **Delhi** district administration introduced a **colour-coding mechanism** to streamline the process of **issuing electronic passes (e-passes)** for those working to provide essential services in the national capital.
- As per the new system, those involved in manufacturing, storage, and transportation of essential items such as **masks, sanitisers and milk**, etc. will be issued **blue-colour passes**. **Delivery persons and related services** will get **orange passes**, while those engaged in **groceries** will be given **green passes**. **Yellow** is for **retailers**, **pink** for **doctors**,

nurses and other health workers, red for chemists and pharmacists and purple is for miscellaneous categories such as the media.

- CM Kejriwal has released a dedicated helpline number '1031' for those who require the e-pass. Later, the Delhi government also released a WhatsApp number, 9873743727, for the same purpose.
- **J&K Administrative Council** directed the **immediate release of all pensions of one month to pensioners** in view of the COVID 19 outbreak. Also to immediately release **one month's wages** for all **daily wagers** . **Ration packets** were also distributed among the **destitute and slum dwellers**.
- **Bihar government** has released rupees **100 crore as an assistance** package for poor people of the state in view of ongoing lockdown in view of Coronavirus outbreak. This decision was taken in a high level meeting which was chaired by **Chief Minister Nitish Kumar**

Revision Points

State	Capital	Chief Minister	Governor
Andhra Pradesh	Amaravati	Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy	BiswaBhusanHarichandan
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar	Pema Khandu	Brigadier BD Mishra
Assam	Dispur	SarabanandaSonowal	Jagdish Mukhi
Bihar	Patna	Nitish Kumar	Phagu Chauhan
Chhattisgarh	Raipur	Bhupesh Baghel	AnusuiyaUikey
Goa	Panaji	Pramod Sawant	S.P Malik
Gujarat	Gandhi Nagar	Vijaybhai R. Rupani	Acharya Devvrat
Haryana	Chandigarh	Manohar Lal Khattar	Satyadev Narayan Arya
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla	Jai Ram Thakur	BandaruDattatraya
Jharkhand	Ranchi	Hemant Soren	Draupadi Murmu
Karnataka	Bengaluru	B S Yediyurappa	VajubhaiRudabhaiVala
Kerala	Thiruvananthapuram	Pinarayi Vijayan	Arif Mohammed Khan
Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	Shivraj Singh Chouhan	Lalji Tandon
Maharashtra	Mumbai	Uddhav Thackrey	Bhagat Singh Koshyari
Manipur	Imphal	N Biren Singh	Padmanabha Balkrishna Acharya (Add. Charge)
Meghalaya	Shillong	Conrad Sangma	RN Ravi (Additional Charge)
Mizoram	Aizawl	Pu Zoramthanga	P S Sreedharan Pillai
Nagaland	Kohima	Neiphiu Rio	RN Ravi
Odisha	Bhubaneshwar	Naveen Patnaik	Ganeshi Lal

Punjab	Chandigarh	Amarinder Singh	V P Singh Badnore
Rajasthan	Jaipur	Ashok Gehlot	Kalraj Mishra
Sikkim	Gangtok	Prem Singh Tamang(PS Golay)	Ganga Prasad
Tamil Nadu	Chennai	Edappadi K. Palaniswami	Banwarilal Purohit
Telangana	Hyderabad	K. Chandrasekhar Rao	TamilisaiSoundararajan
Tripura	Agartala	Biplab Kumar Deb	Ramesh Bais
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	Yogi Adityanath	Anandiben Patel
Uttarakhand	Dehradun	Trivendra Singh Rawat	Baby Rani Maurya
West Bengal	Kolkata	Mamata Banerjee	Jagdeep Dhankhar

Important National News

Cabinet Approvals

Cabinet gives nod for FDI policy on civil aviation; NRIs can acquire up to 100% equity in Air India

- The Cabinet approved **Foreign Direct Investment, FDI** policy on **civil aviation**. Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar stated, FDI policy was amended to permit foreign investment in **Air India**.
- Non Resident Indians can acquire up to **100 per cent equity** in **Air India** under automatic route. The Minister stated, earlier only **49 per cent** were available for sale to NRIs but now they can purchase 100 per cent. He stated, India has become most favoured nation in FDI.
- Mr Javadekar stated, Government is proactively engaged to tackle the situation and the Prime Minister is himself monitoring the situation everyday. He stated, more then **6 lakh passengers** have been screened at the airports so far.

Cabinet approves MoU between Railways, Germany

- The **Union Cabinet** approved a **memorandum of understanding** signed between **India** and **Germany** for **technological cooperation** in the **railway sector**.
- The government in a release stated that the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of a MoU signed between **Ministry of Railways** with **DB Engineering and Consulting GMBH of Germany** for technological cooperation in railways
- India and Germany had signed the MoU in February this year for technological cooperation in railway sector that will enable **cooperation in freight operations** (including cross-border transport, automotive transport and logistics), passenger operations (including high-speed and cross-border traffic), infrastructure building and management (including dedicated freight corridors and development of passenger stations).
- The MoU will also help the Indian Railways in development of a modern, competitive railway organisation (including the improvement of organizational structures and railway reformation), IT solutions for railway operations, marketing

and sales as well as administrative purposes, predictive maintenance, private train operations and any other areas which may be mutually agreed in writing between the two sides.

Cabinet approves Production Incentive Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing

- Union Cabinet has approved financial assistance to the **Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters Scheme** for development of world class infrastructure along with common facilities and amenities through **Electronics Manufacturing Clusters**.
- Union Minister **Ravi Shankar Prasad** stated that the government also approved **Production Incentive Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing**.
- The scheme proposes production linked incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in mobile phone manufacturing and specified electronic components.
- The Minister stated, the government will emphasize on mobile and component manufacturing in India. He stated that the Centre will invest Rs 20 lakh crore in this sector which will provide employment to 25 lakh people in next five years.
- The Cabinet also gave its nod to scheme on Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks for financing Common Infrastructure Facilities in three Bulk Drug Parks with financial implication of **Rs 3,000 crore** for **next five years**.
- Bulk Drug Park Scheme is expected to reduce manufacturing cost of bulk drugs in the country and dependency on other countries for bulk drugs.
- Production Linked Incentive Scheme for promotion of domestic manufacturing of critical Key Starting Material/Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, (APIs) in the country with financial implications of Rs 6,940 crore for next eight years also got approval.
- The Cabinet has approved inclusion of the **AYUSH Health and Wellness Centres** component of **Ayushman Bharat in National AYUSH Mission**. The move will reduce the burden on secondary and tertiary health care facilities.
- Union Cabinet also approved signing and ratifying of the **Extradition Treaty** between **India** and **Belgium**. Offences relating to taxation, or revenue or offences of fiscal character also fall within the scope of the treaty.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved expenditure for reimbursing the losses under Minimum Support Price operations for cotton during the cotton years 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Union Cabinet approves construction of 780 kilometer of green highways in four states

- Union Cabinet has approved a proposal for the construction of **780 kilometer** of green highways at a cost of **7,660 crore rupees**.
- Union Minister **Prakash Javadekar** stated the project pertains to rehabilitation and upgradation of various National Highways in four states, **Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh** and **Andhra Pradesh**.
- Union Cabinet also approved reconstruction scheme for Yes Bank. Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** stated SBI will invest **49 per cent** equity in Yes Bank with other investors also being invited. She stated, the moratorium on withdrawals from Yes bank will be lifted within 3 days of notification of the reconstruction scheme.

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has given its approval for introducing the Scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products. Under it a mechanism would be created for reimbursement of taxes or duties or levies, at the central, state and local level, which are currently not being refunded under any other mechanism, but are incurred in the process of manufacture and distribution of exported products.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, also gave its approval to the proposal of Department of Fertilizers to remove anomalies in the **Modified New Pricing Scheme -III** for determination of fixed costs for urea units. Under it additional fixed cost of **350 rupees per Tonne** will be given to 30 urea manufacturing units.
- Urea units which are more than 30 years old and are converted to gas will get special compensation of 150 rupees per tonne.

Cabinet gives nod to Companies Second Amendment Bill to enable Indian firms to list on foreign exchanges

- Union Cabinet has approved the **Companies (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019** to amend the Companies Act, 2013. This will enable the listing of Indian companies on stock exchanges in foreign jurisdictions. The listing of Indian companies in foreign stock exchanges is expected to increase the competitiveness of Indian companies in terms of access to capital, broader investor base and better valuations.
- The framework for enabling such listing under the foreign exchange and securities laws would be finalised by the Ministry of Finance in consultation with Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Reserve Bank of India and the Securities and Exchange Board of India.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated, the priority is to remove **criminality under the Act** and the Bill will further ease of living for law abiding corporates. She stated, 72 changes brought in the Bill will lead to further declogging of the criminal justice system in the country.
- The Minister stated, re-categorisation of 23 offences have been done in the new Bill. In another decision, the cabinet approved mega consolidation of **ten Public Sector Banks** into four with effect from **1st of next month**. Ms Sitharaman stated, the amalgamation will enable creation of digitally driven consolidated banks with global heft and business synergies.

Govt bans export of anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine

- Government banned export of anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine and formulations made from it in the wake of **COVID-19** outbreak
- It is aimed at ensuring sufficient availability of the medicine in the domestic market. However, export of the medicine will be allowed on humanitarian grounds on case-to-case basis as per the recommendation of Ministry of External Affairs.
- Earlier, Indian Council of Medical Research had recommended the use of **hydroxychloroquine** for treating healthcare workers handling suspected or confirmed coronavirus cases and also the asymptomatic household contacts of the lab-confirmed cases.

HighLevel Committee chaired by Home Minister approves over Rs. 5,751 crore to eight States for calamity damage relief

- The **High Level Committee**, HLC under the Chairmanship of **Home Minister Amit Shah** has approved additional Central assistance of over **5 thousand 7 hundred 51 crore rupees** under **National Disaster Response Fund**, NDRF to eight States, which were affected by floods, landslides, cyclone, drought last year.
- The approved additional Central assistance to eight States from NDRF subject to the adjustment of 50 per cent of balances available in the SDRF account as on 1st April of the financial year.
- Over 953 crore rupees given to Bihar of which 400 crore rupees already released on account basis, over 460 crore to Kerala, over 177 crore rupees to Nagaland, over 179 crore to Odisha, over 1758 crore rupees to Maharashtra, nearly 1120 crore rupees to Rajasthan, over 1090 crore rupees to West Bengal for floods, landslides, cyclone, drought (kharif) during 2019 and over 11 crore rupees to Karnataka towards additional assistance under Animal Husbandry sector for drought (rabi) of 2018-19.
- During the 2019-20, till date, Centre has already released over **10 thousand 937 crore rupees** to **29 States** including erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir as Central share from **State Disaster Response Fund** and additional assistance of over 14 thousand 108 crore rupees to 8 States under NDRF.

DST launches nationwide exercise to map & boost Covid19 solutions with R&D, seed & scale up support

- Rising to the National call to combat the public health crisis arising out of Covid19 pandemic, the **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** is synergising and consolidating various activities carried out by the **Ministry of S&T** and its network of autonomous institutions and scientific bodies across the country.
- The solutions and novel applications to address Covid19 pandemic related challenges are being taken up through a three pronged approach. These include (a) extensive mapping of solutions requiring R&D support, startups with viable products requiring facilitation and manufacturing support; (b) identification of market deployable products requiring seed support and (c) support for solutions already in market but requiring substantial scale up to augment their manufacturing infrastructure and capabilities.
- DST has set up a “**Covid19 Task Force**” for mapping of technologies from R&D labs, academic institutions, startups and MSMEs. The capacity mapping group has representatives from **DST, DBT, ICMR, MeitY, CSIR, AIM, MSME, Startup India** and **AICTE**. The aim is to identify the most promising startups that are close to scaleup, who may need financial or other help or connects based on its projected demand to rapidly scaleup.
- DST through the synergetic approach involving scientific and research institutions, researchers, scientists, incubators, startups and tech companies is geared to address the challenges arising out of Covid19 pandemic.

Northern Railway makes first prototype of hospital isolation coach

- **The Northern Railway** has successfully made the **first prototype of hospital isolation coach** for COVID-19 patients.
- After clearance when the prototype will be finalized, 10 railway coaches per week will be converted into isolation wards for Covid-19 patients by each Zonal Railway and the same shall be placed all across India to fight against COVID -19.

- In order to construct an isolation cabin prototype for the patients, the middle berth has been removed from one side of the coach while all three berths have been removed in front of the patient berth. There are 10 isolation ward in each coach. There is provision of 415 volt supply extremely also.
- Coaches are being sanitized properly before and after the execution of work.

Implementation of Stamp Act changes deferred by 3 months till July 1

- The **Revenue Department** stated the provisions of the amended **Indian Stamp Act**, which was to come into force from **April 1**, will now be effective from July 1.
- To rationalise and harmonise the system of levying stamp duty and help curb tax evasion, the government had through Finance Act 2019 amended the **Indian Stamp Act, 1899**. Certain changes were to be effective from April 1, 2020.
- Through a notification the Revenue Department stated these amended provisions will come into effect from **July 1, 2020**.
- As part of the amendments, it was decided that the stamp duty rates levied by Maharashtra will be taken as a benchmark as it accounts for 70 per cent of the total collection.

Govt forms 11 empowered groups to suggest measures to healthcare, minimise hardships to people during lockdown

- Government has constituted **11 different Empowered** groups to suggest measures to ramp up healthcare, put the economy back on track and reduce the misery of people as quickly as possible post 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Each group has a senior representative from PMO and the Cabinet Secretariat to ensure seamless coordination. These groups have been set up under the **Disaster Management Act**. The groups have been empowered to formulate plans and to take all necessary steps for their time-bound implementation. The initiative is being viewed as pro-active step by the government to deal with multiple challenges which the outbreak of COVID-19 has posed.
- The Empowered Group on Medical Emergency and Management Plan will be headed by NITI Aayog member **Dr V Paul**,
- While the Group on Availability of Hospitals, Disease Surveillance and Testing and Critical Care Training will work under the Chairmanship of Environment **Secretary C K Mishra**.
- The Empowered Group on ensuring the availability of essential medical equipment, production Procurement, Import and Distribution will be headed by Pharmaceuticals Secretary **P D Vaghela**,
- While the Group on augmenting Human Resources and Capacity Building will function under Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) **Secretary Arun Panda**.
- Drinking Water **Secretary Parameswaran Iyer** will lead the Group on Facilitating Supply Chain and Logistics Management for availability of necessary items.
- **CEO NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant** will head the Group on coordinating with the private sector. The Group on Economic and Welfare measures will function under Economic Affairs Secretary **Atanu Chakraborty** and Information and Broadcasting Secretary **Ravi Mittal** will head the Group on Information, Communication and Public Awareness.

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) Secretary **Ajay Sawhney** look after the Group on Technology and Data Management, HRD Secretary **Amit Khare** will head the panel on Public Grievances while Home Secretary **Ajay Kumar Bhalla** will head the Empowered Group constituted on Strategic issues relating to Lockdown.

Modi govt launches PM CARES Fund, Donate to help India fight Covid-19

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of an assistance and **emergency situation relief fund** where people can contribute and help in the government's fight against coronavirus.
- The Prime Minister's **Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations** Fund will go a long way in creating a healthier India, he stated.
- People from all walks of life expressed their desire to donate to India's war against COVID-19, he stated, adding the fund has been constituted respecting that spirit.
- In India, like the rest of the world, the spread of coronavirus has been alarming and is posing severe health and economic ramifications for our country, it stated.
- The Prime Minister's Office has been receiving spontaneous and innumerable requests for donations to support the government in the wake of this emergency.
- Keeping in mind the need for having a dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide relief to the affected, a public charitable trust under the name of '**Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund**' (**PM CARES Fund**)' has been set up, it stated.
- People can visit www.pmindia.gov.in to make contributions using credit and debit cards, UPI, net banking and RTGS or NEFT, it stated.

24x7 National Teleconsultation Centre to answer COVID-19 related queries

- COVID-19, **National Teleconsultation Centre** has been launched by the Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan
- A single **IVRS number 91-9115444155** will connect to multiple telephone lines established in the Centre established in AIIMS, New Delhi.
- The Centre is a telemedicine hub, through which, expert doctors from various clinical domains will be available 24x7 to answer questions related to COVID-19 all.
- This is a multi-modal telecommunication hub through which two way audio-video and text communications can be exchanged from any part of the country as well as the from the world. The modes of communication will include simple mobile telephony as well as two way video communications using **WhatsApp, Skype** and **Google Duo**.
- Through this system multiple modes of communication will be possible using Skype, Whatsapp and others.
- The centre would be manned by a mix of specialists to help in managing serious COVID patients.

- This centre is also integrated with the National Medical College Network, NMCN. 1 National Medical College Network (NMCN) terminal has also been established for two way video conferencing with all the 50 Medical Colleges on the network.
- Presently, there are four workstations, 1 NMCN terminal and 6 phone lines. COVID 19 National Teleconsultation Centre is reachable from anywhere in the world.

Union Labour Ministry notifies amendment in EPF Scheme to allow withdrawal of non-refundable advance by EPF members in the event of outbreak of pandemic

- **Union Ministry of Labour and Employment** has issued notification **GSR 225(E)** amending EPF Scheme 1952 to allow withdrawal of non-refundable advance by EPF members/subscribers in the wake of COVID -19 pandemic in the country.
- The notification permits withdrawal of upto the amount of basic wages and dearness allowance for **three months** or upto **75% of the amount standing** to member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, in the event of outbreak of epidemic or pandemic.
- COVID-19 has been declared pandemic by appropriate authorities for the entire country and therefore employees working in establishments and factories across entire India, who are members of the EPF Scheme, 1952 are eligible for the benefits of non-refundable advance.

PM Modi allocates Rs 15,000 Cr for Healthcare Infra to combat Covid-19

- Underlining that health services should be the only priority of state governments at this time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated the Centre has made a provision of **Rs 15,000 crore** to strengthen the country's **health infrastructure** to tackle coronavirus.
- In his second address to the nation, PM Modi informed that the availability of testing facilities related to COVID-19, personal protective equipment, isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators and other necessary tools are being increased rapidly.
- The Centre has made a provision of Rs 15,000 crore for strengthening country's health infrastructure for the treatment of, the prime minister stated.

Election Commission allows use of indelible ink for stamping 'home quarantined'

- The **Election Commission** has allowed usage of **indelible ink** by health authorities for stamping 'home quarantined' on the hands of those suspected of being infected with the new coronavirus, easing its policy of using the ink only for voting purposes.
- The EC's sou-moto decision was communicated to the secretary, health ministry, all chief electoral officers across states, and to the sole manufacturer of the indelible ink, **Mysore Paints & Varnish Limited, a Karnataka government undertaking**.
- It also suggested the health ministry may standardise the mark and the location on the body where the ink is to be applied. The indelible ink mark normally stays for three days when applied on the skin.

DST sets up COVID-19 Task Force for mapping technologies

- **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** has set up a COVID-19 Task Force for mapping of technologies from Research and Development labs, academic institutions, start-ups and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- It also aims at funding nearly market-ready solutions in the area of diagnostics, testing, health care delivery solutions and equipment supplies. Some of these solutions include masks, sanitizers, affordable kits for screening, ventilators and oxygenators.

DST is also coordinating an effort to upscale appropriate technologies and manufacturing available in India for addressing a plethora of issues related to COVID-19.

- The capacity mapping group consists of representatives including from DST, Department of Biotechnology, Indian Council of Medical Research, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- The Task Force is to identify the most promising start-ups that are close to scale up, who may need financial or other help or connects or projected demand to rapidly scale up

India proposes online platform for SAARC to jointly combat coronavirus

- India has proposed setting up of a **common electronic platform** for all **SAARC nations** to share expertise and best practices in jointly combating the coronavirus pandemic.
- India made the proposal at a video-conference of senior health officials of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries. The SAARC is a regional grouping comprising **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.
- At an India-initiated video-conference of SAARC leaders on March 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had suggested that health professionals of the member nations could come together to jointly fight against the coronavirus pandemic.
- India proposed a shared electronic platform for all SAARC nations to share and exchange information, knowledge, expertise and best practices for jointly combating the coronavirus epidemic, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated in a statement.
- It was informed that considerable work had already gone into the creation of the platform, which could also serve as a multi-purpose vehicle to further discuss and conduct activities such as online training for emergency response personnel, the MEA stated.
- The Indian side proposed that till the electronic platform is fully operational, a network of experts representing the health services of all SAARC countries may be set up on email or **WhatsApp** to enable exchange of all relevant information on a real-time basis.

Centre announces relief package worth Rs 1.7 lakh crore for poor

- Union Government has announced a package of **1.7 lakh crore rupees** for the poor who need immediate help in the wake of COVID-19 like migrant workers and urban and rural poor. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated they have come up with Prime Minister **Gareeb Kalyan** scheme to help the migrant and poor people.

- She also announced insurance cover of **50 lakh rupees per person for three months** for COVID-19 warriors who are exposing themselves to the virus. They include doctors, paramedics, healthcare workers, sanitation workers, ASHA workers dealing with coronavirus outbreak.
- The Finance Minister elaborated that 5 kilo rice or wheat will be given for the next three months for free in addition to the 5 kilos already being given to 80 crore people. Additionally, one kilo of preferred pulses will also be given per family for free under **Pradhan Mantri Anna Yojana**.
- Ms Sitharaman stated, around 8.70 crore farmers will get 2,000 rupees in first week of April in their account under existing **Prime Minister's Kisan Yojana**. Besides, 20.5 crore women Jan Dhan Account holders will get 500 rupees per month for the next three months, while poor senior citizens, widows and disabled will get an ex-gratia of 1,000 rupees.
- Under Prime Minister's **Garib Kalyan Yojana**, MNREGA wages would be increased by 20 from 182 to 202 rupees with effect from 1st of next month. Wage increase under MNREGA will provide an additional 2,000 rupees benefit annually to a worker. This will benefit approximately 13.62 crore families. The government will contribute employees as well as employer's contribution to the provident fund for the next three months of companies with up to 100 employees with 90 per cent earning not more than 15,000 rupees. The contribution will be a total of 24 per cent of eligible wages.
- Under **UJJWALA scheme**, gas cylinders would be provided to **eight crore poor families** free of cost for the next three months. Senior citizens, widows and disabled will be given an ex-gratia of **1,000 rupees** in two instalments over next three months. This will benefit three crore poor senior citizens, widows and Divyangs.
- Ms Sitharaman stated, workers will be allowed to draw a non-refundable advance of 75 per cent from credit in provident fund account or three months salary, whichever is lower. She stated, the limit of collateral-free loans to 63 lakh women self-held groups is being doubled to 20 lakh rupees.
- The State Government will be asked to utilize the funds available under District Mineral Fund for supplementing and augmenting facilities of medical testing, screening and other requirements in connection with preventing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic as well as treating the patients affected with this pandemic.

AIIMS sets up Task Force to develop management protocol for COVID-19

- **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi** has set up a **Task Force** to develop a **management protocol** for **COVID-19**. It has also constituted several committees to respond to challenges of rising number of the infections which may emerge in the coming days.
- The committees have been constituted for coordination of various activities related to management of patients. The AIIMS also stated that all health care personnel will be trained to handle and use personal protection equipment.

Rajya Sabha passes National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill 2019

- Rajya Sabha passed both the **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill 2019** and the **National Commission for Homoeopathy Medicine Bill 2019**. Both the bills were passed by voice vote.

- Union minister for **AYUSH Shripad Yesso Naik** stated, the two bills aim at providing a quality and affordable medical education system ensuring high quality medical professionals in Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy, in all parts of the country.
- He stated, the Commission will also ensure adoption of latest medical research in the work of such professionals. The minister emphasised that it was only due to the strong will and vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the ministry of AYUSH was created in 2014.

Govt creates WhatsApp Chatbot for queries on Novel Coronavirus

- The government has created **WhatsApp Chatbot** for queries on Novel Coronavirus COVID-19. National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority, NPPA stated, the WhatsApp Chatbot is called **MyGov Corona Helpdesk**.
- It stated people can just save the number 9013151515 on WhatsApp and get an automated response on queries related to Corona

Indian Railways to electrify all broad gauge routes by December 2023, bets on renewable energy

- **Indian Railways** to electrify all broad gauge routes by **December 2023**, bets on renewable energy.
- In the year **2023-2024** (till the month of December 2023), a target of electrifying **4,310 km** of broad gauge route has been planned Hence, Indian Railways has planned to electrify a total of **28,810 km** of broad gauge route. Railway Ministry has planned to electrify the remaining broad gauge routes on the network by the month of December **2023**
- The planning for the electrification of the remaining broad gauge routes of Indian Railways network is as follows:
- In the year 2019-2020, a target of electrifying 6,000 km of broad gauge route has been planned
- In the year 2020-2021, a target of electrifying 6,000 km of broad gauge route has been planned
- In the year 2021-2022, a target of electrifying 6,000 km of broad gauge route has been planned
- In the year 2022-2023, a target of electrifying 6,5000 km of broad gauge route has been planned
- In the year 2023-2024 (till the month of December 2023), a target of electrifying 4,310 km of broad gauge route has been planned
- Hence, Indian Railways has planned to electrify a total of 28,810 km of broad gauge route.
- Additionally, in a bid to reduce the fuel burden of the Indian Railways network, the Railway Ministry has planned to install land based solar power plants across the country, over the unutilized railway land. This will be done to meet the energy requirements for both, non-traction as well as traction purposes

Indian Railways for world-class stations, First-of-its-kind form based codes being developed by IRSDC

- **PiyushGoyal-led Indian Railways** focuses on world-class stations, The **Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation Limited (IRSDC)** is developing a first-of-its-kind "**Form Based Codes**" for the development of railway land.
- IRSDC, with support from **Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation**, is developing Form Based Codes for designing and approval of layout plans as well as building plans for station areas that ensure a compact, pedestrian-friendly, market responsive, transit oriented, sustainable development.

Government says Rs 6.16 lakh crore investment approved under PMAY(U)

- An investment of **Rs 6.16 lakh crore** has been approved so far under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)** and the committed central assistance is **Rs 1.65 lakh crore**, Union minister **Hardeep Singh Puri** stated.
- The Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs also told Lok Sabha that no data regarding property-less people is maintained by the ministry.
- **PMAY(U)** seeks to provide all weather pucca houses to beneficiaries in economically weaker sections in urban areas.
- According to him, poverty alleviation is also a focus area. The total investment approved under PMAY(U), so far, is Rs 6.16 lakh crore with committed central assistance of Rs 1.65 lakh crore, he stated.

Financial benefit under PM- Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana released to 8,69,79,391 beneficiaries: Agriculture Minister

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar informed the Lok Sabha that financial benefit under the **PM- Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana** has been released to **8 Crore 69 lakh 79 thousand 391 beneficiaries** in the country.
- The Minister also informed that under PM-KISAN Scheme, funds are not released State-wise but transferred directly into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries identified by the State Governments.

Defence Minister releases Draft Defence Procurement Procedure 2020

- Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** released **Draft Defence Procurement Procedure(DPP)**, 2020 at a function in **New Delhi**
- The policy is aligned with the vision of the government to empower the private industry through the Make in India initiative with the ultimate of turning India into a global manufacturing hub. The government has introduced leasing as another category to get defence equipment at affordable rates.
- Mr Singh stated, to facilitate greater participation of the Indian industry and develop a robust defence industrial base, use of indigenous raw materials, special alloys and software has been incentivized under the DPP-2020

Indian Institutes of Information Technology to get 'importance' tag after Lok Sabha nod

- The Lok Sabha passed a bill which seeks to confer the status of Institution of National Importance (INI) on five more **Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs)**. The Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020, proposes to bring the five institutions under the **IIIT (Public-private Partnership) Act, 2017**, similar to the other 15 IIITs established under the scheme in Public-private Partnership (PPP) mode.
- The five IIITs which are proposed to be given the INI status are located in Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala and Raichur. These five IIITs along with 15 others which are also build in PPP mode will now be able to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (BTech) or Master of Technology (MTech) or PhD degree.
- It will also enable the institutes to attract enough students required to develop a strong research base in the country in the field of information technology.

Finance Commission Constitutes Committee To Review Fiscal Consolidation Roadmap Of General Government

- The Chairman of the **Fifteenth Finance Commission** has constituted a Committee to review the **fiscal consolidation roadmap** of the general government. The Committee shall make recommendations on the definition of deficit and debt for the Central government, overall states, the General Government and public sector enterprises by considering all

explicit and measurable liabilities of the sovereign and by bringing in consistency between the definition of debt (stock) and deficit (flow).

- The Committee shall also lay down the principles for arriving at the debt of the general government debt and consolidated public sector with appropriate netting to avoid double-counting. The Committee shall define contingent liabilities, provide quantifiable measures of such liabilities, wherever possible, and specify conditions under which "contingent" liabilities become "explicit" liabilities of the public sector.
- The Committee shall review the current status of deficit and debt at different levels. The Committee will be chaired by **Chairman N K Singh**. Analytical and data support to the Committee will be provided by a team from **National Institute of Public Finance & Policy, New Delhi**. The Economic Division of the Finance Commission Secretariat shall facilitate and support.

Union Government implementing POSHAN Abhiyaan to address problem of malnutrition across the country

- Union Government is implementing POSHAN Abhiyaan across the country to address the problem of malnutrition. The programme was launched on 8th March in 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jhunjhunu.
- The Abhiyaan aims to reduce malnutrition in the country in a phased manner through a life cycle approach.
- Its goal is to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia among young children, women and adolescent girls and reduce low birth weight.

SC grants permanent commission to women in Indian Navy

- The **Supreme Court (SC)** ordered that the government cannot discriminate against women in the **Indian Navy**, granting **permanent commission** to female officers. The apex court stated men and women should be treated equally in the armed forces.
- The judgment of the court comes a month after it had allowed granting permanent commission to women in the **Indian Army**.
- A bench headed by Justice **DY Chandrachud** pronounced the judgment, directing the Centre to grant permanent commission to serving women officers in the Navy in three months with increments. The order was passed after the court scrapped the statutory bar for inducting women.
- The bench headed by Justice Chandrachud had condemned the Centre as the latter waited for nine years before granting women permanent commissions, that too in limited streams.

Prez Kovind nominates former CJI Ranjan Gogoi to Rajya Sabha

- President **Ram Nath Kovind** has nominated Former **Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi** to the **Rajya Sabha**. A notification to this effect was issued by the Centre
- Mr Gogoi served as the **46th Chief Justice of India** from 3rd October 2018 till 17th November last year. President of India nominates **twelve persons** to the Rajya Sabha

HRD Minister says govt providing support to States and UTs through Samagra Shiksha Yojana

- **Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** has stated that Central Government is providing support to the States and UTs through **Samagra Shiksha Yojana** for implementing the various provisions of the **RTE Act**, including opening or strengthening of schools.
- The Minister also stated that under erstwhile **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, till 2017-18 and Samagra Shiksha effective from 2018-19, sanction has been given for 3.64 lakh new elementary schools out of which States and UTs have reported the opening of 3.60 lakh schools.
- He also stated, under erstwhile **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)**, till 2017-18 and Samagra Shiksha effective from 2018-19, 12994 new secondary schools have been sanctioned, out of which States and UTs have reported the opening of 12423 new schools, till 31st December last year.
- The scheme provides for opening of one **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV)** in each district of the country for providing good quality education to children predominantly from the rural areas.

Shri Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurates ROPAX Service from Bhaucha Dhakka to Mandwa in Maharashtra

- **Shri Mansukh Mandaviya**, Minister of State for Shipping (I/C) inaugurated **ROPAX** service from **Bhaucha Dhakka, Mumbai to Mandwa, Alibag** in Maharashtra. Shri Mandaviya visited ROPAX terminal and inspected the facilities created for the passengers. Shri Mandaviya reiterated the importance of Waterways as a mode of transportation and stated that it has opened new avenues for the people to travel with reduced journey time and it will prove as a catalyst for the local economy.
- ROPAX service is a '**Water Transport Service Project**', under Eastern Waterfront Development. The benefits of this service include reduction in the travel time, vehicular emission and traffic on the road. The road distance from Mumbai to Mandwa is about **110 kilometres**, and gruelling road journey takes three to four hours, whereas by waterway it is about 18 kilometre and journey of just an hour.
- **ROPAX Vessel M2M -1** was built in Greece in September 2019. This Vessel is highly manoeuvrable and has a speed of 14knots, and will complete one way trip in about 45 minutes to an hour. The features of this Vessel is that it can carry 200 cars and 1000 passengers at a time and has a ramp on both sides, hence cars can move in and out of the vessel easily and reduce the turn- around time.
- Thus, people can now travel in their cars directly on to ROPAX vessel. Vessel is capable of operating even in Monsoon season, which is a big boon to commuters from **Alibag** area.

Centre launches second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)

- The Centre has launched the **second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)- SBM(G) Phase-II**. It will be implemented from **2020-2021 to 2024-2025** in a mission mode with an outlay of **one lakh 40 thousand 881 crore rupees**. Union Minister of Jal Shakti **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** launched the second phase of the mission at a **National Dissemination and Consultation workshop** in **New Delhi**.
- The second phase will focus on sustaining the gains made under the programme in the last five years in terms of toilet access and usage, ensuring that no one is left behind. It will also ensure that effective solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) is instituted in every Gram Panchayat of the country.

- Union Minister released a study done by the **UNICEF** and **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)** on the impact of the SBM(G) on rural women. The study titled Impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) on the convenience, safety and self-respect of women in rural India - surveyed 6,993 women across the 5 states in February this year. These states are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The survey indicated that the increased access to household toilets has led to the improvement in the Suidha, Suraksha and Swabhimaan of women in rural India.

HM Amit Shah addresses Flag-in ceremony of Ganga Aamantran Abhiyaan

- **Home Minister Amit Shah** has stated that it is not possible to write the history of Indian spirituality, knowledge, culture or economy without the Ganga. Addressing the Flag-in ceremony of **Ganga Aamantran Abhiyaan** in **New Delhi**.
- Mr Shah stated, whether it is about languages, science, religious research, spirituality or values, Indian culture has given most to the entire world and its symbol is **Ganga**.
- Mr Shah stated, in 2014, the **Namami Gange campaign** was started. He stated, it is not just a campaign to build infrastructure or water management or waterways, but a campaign to create a sanskar (value) in the country that the Ganga is not polluted again and the cleanness and uninterruptedness of the holy river continues.

Census India-2021 to be conducted in two phases

- The **Census India-2021** will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will begin from the **1st of next month** and will continue until the **30th of September of 2020**.
- The second phase is Population Enumeration which will be conducted from **9th February to 28th February** next year throughout the country simultaneously.
- Indian census is the largest single source of a range of statistical data on different characteristics of the people of the country.
- With a history of more than 130 years, this reliable and time-tested exercise results in the comprehensive collection of data relating to the people of India **every 10 years**.

MSDE launches Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship programme in Bengaluru

- The Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dr. Mahendra Nath Pandey launched the **Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship programme** in the Indian Institute of Management in **Bengaluru**.
- The Fellowship is launched as part of the SANKALP programme of the ministry to provide skilled manpower for District Skill Committees to prepare the District Skill Development plan.
- Under the pilot project, IIMB will train 75 graduates for two years in preparing the District skill plan considering the skill gaps, market utilities, government schemes and institutions available in the district.
- Graduates from 75 districts in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Meghalaya are chosen for the training.

Crime Multi Agency Centre for sharing info on heinous crime launched

- Minister of State for Home **Nityanand Rai** has launched the Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC) for sharing of information on heinous crime and other issues related to inter-state coordination. Mr Rai launched the Centre at a function organised on the occasion of 35th Inception Day of **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** .
- He also launched the National Cyber crime Training Centre (NCTC) for professional quality e-Learning services on cyber crime investigation to police officers, judges, prosecutors and other stakeholders.
- Mr Rai emphasized the importance of capacity building in cyber-crime investigation and mentioned the Government's resolve in tackling the menace of increasing cyber-crime. He also lauded the role of NCRB networking around 16 thousand Police Stations and over 8 thousand higher Police offices across the country under Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) project.

Parliament passes Mineral Law (Amendment) Bill

- Parliament gave its approval to the **Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020** with the Rajya Sabha adopting the same. The bill envisages curtailing time lag in operationalization of the coal blocks even after their allocation. The bill was passed in a division of votes with 83 members favouring and 12 opposing it. It was passed by the Lok Sabha .
- Reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's thought of Minimum Government, Maximum Governance, Mines Minister **Pralhad Joshi**, stated the amendment would facilitate in making the country self-reliant. He justified that the amendment was needed to ensure uninterrupted coal supplies and other raw material to thermal plants and other industries.

Nitin Gadkari requests Lok Sabha members to spread information about "Udyam Sakhi" portal

- **Minister of micro, small and medium enterprises, Nitin Gadkari** requested the Lok Sabha members to spread the information about "**Udyam Sakhi**" Portal for awareness about government schemes and to facilitate the networking of women start ups, entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, mentors, students and enterprise facilitators.
- Minister also stated an autonomous body under Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises that Institute for **Design of Electrical Measuring Instruments (IDEMI)**, has put in this web portal.
- Minister also stated only 2012 women have benefitted from this portal.

Home Ministry constitutes two special committees to fasten CAPF works

- The Union Home Ministry has constituted **two special committees** to specifically deal with issues and approvals related to the **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)** that render a variety of internal security duties in the country, including border guarding.
- They stated while the first committee will be headed by the **Home Secretary** and will deal with issues that are to be decided between the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and these forces, the second will be headed by the **Secretary (Border Management)** and will only deal with procurement matters.
- The CAPFs are also known as paramilitary forces and comprise the **Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, Central Industrial Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police** and **Sashastra Seema Bal**.
- Though the Assam Rifles is not a CAPF, issues related to the force will also be dealt with by these two committees, which were constituted last week.

- According to the MHA's directions, these committees are special and hence "**routine matters**" will not be taken up

LPG Scheme Closed, But Only 3 States Have Gone Kerosene-Free

- As per a report of the **Parliamentary committee on Petroleum**, only **three States** and **five Union Territories** have become **kerosene free** given the **target of eight crore LPG connections under PM Ujjwala Yojana** was completed last September.
- The report of the Parliamentary Committee on Petroleum, which was tabled last week, points to the gap between the continuing use of kerosene and the claim of 97% LPG coverage nationwide. The committee is headed by BJP member Ramesh Bidhuri.
- The allocation for the scheme has been cut down by 58% from ₹2,724 crore during 2019-20 to ₹1,118 crore during 2020-21. The Petroleum Ministry informed the committee that the government had met the target on September 7, 2019, and 96.9% coverage had been achieved nationwide, except in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Only three States — **Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh** — and the Union Territories of **Delhi, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Andaman & Nicobar Island and Puducherry** have become kerosene-free.

Main national event for International Day of Yoga to be held at Leh

- The main national event for the **International Day of Yoga** will be held at **Leh**, the capital of Ladakh this year. The event, which is held on the **21st of June** every year, will be led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- AYUSH Minister Shripad Yesso Naik stated, the event promises to be unique and different since such a large congregation for Yoga will be taking place in a high altitude location like **Leh** for the first time. The Prime Minister is expected to carry out yogasanas based on Common Yoga Protocol along with an anticipated gathering of 15 to 20 thousand people on the Yoga Day at Leh.
- The Prime Minister leads a mass demonstration of Yoga every year in the main event of International Day of Yoga. A 45-minute yoga drill based on Common Yoga Protocol is the highlight.

Govt Sets up a committee on Kisan Rail

- The Government has set up a committee to work out modalities of **Kisan Rail**. It comprises of representatives of Agriculture and Railway ministries.
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal stated, the committee will also look into cold supply chain for perishables by starting the express and freight trains with refrigerated coaches.
- The Minister stated, Railways is planning for installation of solar panels on un-utilized railway land for meeting its energy needs for both traction and non-traction purposes.

Govt suspends e-visa and existing visa's for France, Germany, Spain in wake of Novel Corona virus

- The government has asked people to refrain from travelling to **China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan, France, Spain and Germany**. Issuing additional travel advisory in view of the Novel Corona virus, the Health Ministry advised them to avoid non-essential travel abroad. It stated, more than 100 countries across the world have reported cases of COVID-19. The people travelling to these countries or those who have travelled abroad might come in contact with people affected with COVID-19.

- Regular visas including e-Visas granted to all foreign nationals who have travel history to these countries on or after 1st of February and who have not yet entered India also stands suspended.
- The advisory further stated that all incoming international passengers returning to India should self-monitor their health and follow required Do's and Dont's. Besides, all passengers having travel history to China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Thailand, Singapore, Iran, Malaysia, France, Spain and Germany are advised to undergo self-imposed quarantine for a period of 14 days from the date of their arrival.

2nd anniversary of Poshan Abhiyaan 'Poshan Pakhwada' being celebrated

- The second anniversary of the **Poshan Abhiyaan Poshan Pakhwada** is being celebrated on 8th March.
- The focus area of the two-week-long Poshan Pakhwada 2020 will be - **Men for Nutrition** - increasing male engagement in Poshan Abhiyaan - to improve Nutritional Indicators.
- It aims at reducing malnutrition from the country in a phased manner, through the life cycle concept, by adopting a synergized and result-oriented approach.

Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel to inaugurate an exhibition titled Jallianwala Bagh in New Delhi on 11th March

- Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel inaugurated an exhibition titled **Jallianwala Bagh** in **New Delhi** on the occasion of **130th Foundation Day of National Archives of India, NAI**.
- The exhibition held at the NAI premises. Based on the original documents, the exhibition is an endeavour to commemorate the centenary of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre covering a period from 1915 to 1950.
- The present exhibition is primarily presented with the help of original and digital copies of archival documents relating to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre available in National Archives of India.

Govt proposes to create 75 lakh Self Help Groups in two years to support women to earn livelihood

- Government is planning to create a total of **75 lakh Self Help Groups** by **2022** to enable more women to get livelihood. Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar stated this while addressing a programme on Women's Empowerment to mark **International Women's Day** in **New Delhi**.
- Mr Tomar stated, Women's Self Help Groups are the backbone of poverty alleviation programmes and the entire focus of the Ministry is oriented towards women's emancipation. He stated there are over 60 lakh SHGs across the country mobilizing more than six crore 73 lakh women.

Govt to make sanitary napkin disposal bags mandatory from January 2021

- **Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar** has stated that **Sanitary napkin makers** will be asked to supply a biodegradable bag with each napkin from **January 2021**. Mr. Javadekar interacted with the members of the women garbage collectors organization in Pune.
- He stated that the possibility of getting infected because of handling used Sanitary Napkins thrown in the garbage was brought to notice by many of the women garbage collectors.
- On this, Mr. Javadekar announced that the sanitation norms for Corporations and municipalities will now be applied to villages with a population of more than **three thousand**.

- The minister also made an important announcement for Pune, saying that 50 small and 50 large waste classification centres will be set up in Pune and financial support for this will be made through the MPs fund. Pune Mayor Muralidhar Mohal was present on the occasion.

Third all-Women Post Office opens in New Delhi

- **Department of Posts, Delhi Circle** has opened the **third all-Women Post Office** in the national capital.
- The post office was inaugurated under New Delhi South West Division to commemorate the International Women's Day celebrations.
- A felicitation ceremony was also organized to award the best women workers of New Delhi South West Division for the year 2019 in different categories.

Govt announces one-time amnesty scheme for non-compliant LLPs

- **The Ministry of corporate affairs (MCA)** has launched a **one-time amnesty scheme** for **Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) companies** that have failed to file the requisite statutory documents such as annual statements, change in directors, etc.
- The move is aimed at **promoting ease of doing business** as well as to **cleanse the system**.
- It provides these companies a one-time relaxation in payment of additional fees and immunity from prosecution.
- The scheme, LLP Settlement Scheme, 2020, allows for a one-time condonation of delay in filing statutorily required documents with the Registrar of Companies (RoC).
- Presently, on non-filing of these forms, LLPs can file such documents on payment of additional fee for Rs 100 for every day of such delay.
- Many firms have a capital of Rs 1 lakh and have penalties amounting to Rs 2-3 lakh, which stops them from approaching for a solution due to the high penalty amount.
- India has around 1.25 lakh active LLPs, of which a majority are in business services, followed by trading, manufacturing and real estate & renting. This one-time scheme benefits around 25,000-30,000 LLPs that have a capital base of around Rs 1 lakh.
- The government has decided to cleanse the entire tax and regulatory structure within which businesses operate. Under this initiative they have successfully launched unique resolution schemes in direct taxes as well as indirect taxes, now a similar scheme has been launched by MCA for LLP's. This one-time relaxation in payment of additional fees and immunity from prosecution would be a good impetus for all the defaulters to come forward and voluntarily accept the compliance framework.

Government nod to automated facial recognition system for identification of bodies, missing children, criminals

- The **Home Ministry** has given approval to the **automated facial recognition system (AFRS)** for identification of unrecognised bodies, missing children and criminals by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**.
- AFRS will use police records and will be accessible only to law enforcement agencies.
- This will facilitate better identification of criminals, unidentified dead bodies and missing or found children and persons and will not violate privacy.

Health Ministry organizes a national level training workshop for all the states on COVID-19 management

- Health Ministry is organizing a national level training workshop for all the states and hospitals from other Ministries on COVID-19 management.
- The workshop to be organized in New Delhi, will train the trainers for COVID-19. It will give training on hospital preparedness and non-pharmaceutical interventions, infection prevention, standard precautions, environmental cleaning, disinfection and biomedical waste management, risk communications and community engagement and other aspects to tackle the situation related to novel Coronavirus.
- Yesterday, Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan had said that such workshop will be taken up to the district level.

Google to launch cloud region in Delhi, its second in India

- Google plans to open a Delhi cloud region, the company's second in India since it launched one in Mumbai in 2017.
- The new cloud region will take Google's existing network to eight in the Asia Pacific region and 22 globally.
- Google cloud regions bring Google Cloud Platform (GCP) services to global organisations in industries like media and entertainment, retail and manufacturing, helping them drive growth, differentiation, and innovation for their business.

Setu Bharatam scheme: All level crossings on NH to be replaced by Over/under Bridges

- Government aimed to replace all the level crossings on National Highways by Road Over Bridges or Road Under Bridges under the **Setu Bharatam scheme**.
- The programme is being implemented by **Road Transport and Highways Ministry** to ensure safe and smooth flow of traffic and reduced road fatalities by 50 percent by 2020.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Setu Bharatam scheme on **4th March in 2016** for building rail over-bridges or underpasses for safe and seamless travel on National Highways.

Aurangabad Airport renamed as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Airport

- The Maharashtra Government renamed the Aurangabad Airport as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Airport.
- The airport has been renamed after Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- The BJP, a former ally of Shiv Sena, had reportedly demanded that the Shiv Sena-led Maharashtra government rename the city of Aurangabad as 'Sambhajinagar'.

IWD 2020: Thinlas Chorol sets up first women's travel company in Ladakh

- The International Women's Day will be celebrated on **8th of March**. Government has taken series of initiatives to empower women. People are using the **#IWD 2020** and **#BetiPadhaoDeshBadhao** to share uplifting stories in the run up to International Women's Day.
- In the Union Territory of Ladakh, Women have broken all the barriers and the dominance of men in the trekking arena. Once considered as the male dominated sector, trekking is now empowering rural women. It has transformed the life of many women from dependent to Independent.

- In Ladakh, a young woman **Thinlas Chorol** has introduced woman trekking guide in the male dominated trekking industry. To train the other women as trekking guide , she setup the first women's travel company fully operated by women only.

President Kovind gives nod for resuming delimitation exercise in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland

- President Ram Nath Kovind gave his nod for resuming **delimitation exercise** in **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland**.
- A Delimitation Commission was set up under the **Delimitation Act, 2002** to readjust the division of each state and union territory into territorial constituencies for the purpose of Lok Sabha and state assembly elections on the basis of census figures of 2001.
- Adding further the order stated, “The Delimitation Commission completed the delimitation exercise and the Delimitation Order, 2008 in respect of all the states, except in these four northeastern states.”
- Delimitation Commissions in India have been constituted four times in the past in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952, in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.

Shri Amit Shah inaugurates the campus of NSG Regional Hub at Kolkata

- Presiding over the inauguration of the **National Security Guard (NSG) Regional Hub campus at Kolkata** Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah termed this as an important step in the direction of giving adequate facilities to the brave NSG jawans, which are important for them to function unhindered in ensuring the security of the Nation.
- The Home Minister presided over the inauguration and founding stone laying ceremony of various welfare projects for NSG, amounting to over **Rs. 245 crores**, across Kolkata, Manesar, Chennai and Mumbai. He stated that the various facilities and schemes being inaugurated , would go a long way in ensuring the boosting of capabilities of the force and raising the morale of the jawans.
- This state-of-the-art regional hub complex at Kolkata, worth over Rs.162 crores, will have Residential and Non Residential Complexes to house 460 persons and families, office accommodation and modern training facilities such as Baffle firing range, indoor shooting range, obstacles, swimming pool, sports complex and artificial rock craft wall etc.
- The area of responsibility of this Hub comprises of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand & the entire North East. The Kolkata hub, hitherto functioning from the Kolkata airport, is the fourth to have permanent infrastructure after Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad.

Tourism Minister, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel to launch multilingual Incredible India website in New Delhi

- The Minister of State (IC) for Tourism & Culture, **Shri Prahlad Singh Patel** will launch the **multilingual Incredible India** website in **New Delhi**. The launch event will witness participation by key stakeholders of tourism industry, foreign ambassadors, foreign correspondents, major associations among others .
- Incredible India website, the flagship project launched by Ministry of Tourism, is a promotional website with an aim to project India as a ‘must-visit’ destination across the globe. Ministry of Tourism has revamped the multilingual

Incredible India website design, with an aim to provide more information about India's tourist destinations, attractions, experiences, and where out value lies.

- Ministry of Tourism's Incredible India 2.0 website aims towards showcasing the varied tourism products of India at a global arena by providing visitors with relevant, personalized and contextual digital experience escalating tourism awareness, attraction and opportunities.
- The website now comprises of a plethora of information around 165 destinations, 2700+ pages, 28 States + 9 UTs alongwith multiple attractions. The website which is currently hosted in English and Hindi is now being launched in **Chinese, Arabic and Spanish** with primary objective to effectively engage the visitors across web and social media platforms thereby providing an exciting experience to the travellers visiting the website from countries from where we witness major tourist footfall.

Government allows airlines to provide in-flight Wi-Fi services

- The central government permitted **airlines** operating in India to provide in-flight **Wi-Fi services** to passengers, according to official notification.
- The Pilot-in-Command may permit the access of Internet services by passengers on board an aircraft in flight, through Wi-Fi on board, when laptop, smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, e-reader or a point of sale device is used in flight mode or airplane mode, the notification stated.
- While taking the delivery of its first Boeing 787-9 aircraft at Everett, Vistara CEO Leslie Thng had told reporters that it would be the first plane in India to provide in-flight Wi-Fi services.

Government cites concerns over divesting stake below 51 per cent in NTPC, PowerGrid

- The Power Ministry has raised concerns over the proposed strategic divestment of government equity in **NTPC, PFC and Power Grid**, which may bring down its stake to **below 51 per cent**.
- Earlier, under disinvestment plan, it was proposed to divest government equity below 51 per cent of its stake in certain public sector undertakings, including NTPC, PowerGrid and Power Finance Corporation (PFC).
- Thereafter certain foreign bond holder in these PSU had raised concerns about that. The power entities are supposed to compensate bondholders after reduction of the government stake **to below 51 per cent**. Moreover, the PSUs have raised concerns about this proposal saying that it would not go down well with investors particularly foreign lenders.
- An official stated that the power ministry has forwarded these PSUs concerns over reducing government stake below 51 per cent to the Finance Ministry. Presently, the government owns 54.14 per cent in NTPC, 54.96 per cent in PowerGrid and 55.99 per cent in PFC.
- On foundation day celebrations, the BEE launched star rating programme for deep freezers and light commercial air conditioners (LCAC). The star labelling programme for deep freezer and LCAC together are expected to save about nine billion units of electricity and reduce CO2 emission by 7.7 million tonnes by 2030.

Govt suspends all visas granted to nationals of Italy, Iran, South Korea & Japan

- Government has suspended all regular visa and e-visa granted to nationals of **Italy, Iran, South Korea and Japan** with immediate effect. In a revised travel advisory, Health Ministry stated that those requiring to travel to India due to compelling reasons may seek fresh visa from the nearest Indian Embassy or Consulate.
- Government has put export restrictions on 26 pharma ingredients and medicines, including paracetamol, vitamin B1 and B12, amid the coronavirus outbreak in China. With this, export of these Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, APIs and formulations require licence from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, DGFT.
- Information and Broadcasting Ministry has asked all private satellite News TV and FM Radio Channels to give adequate publicity to the revised travel advisory issued by the Health Ministry in the wake of novel coronavirus. In its advisory, the Ministry stated, the channels can also run tickers on novel coronavirus. It stated Electronic media has always been at the forefront to carry such message as it is a powerful tool to reach out to the people in the country.

Revision Points

Portfolio	Union Minister	Constituency
Ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions	Narendra Modi	Varanasi
Ministry of Defence	Rajnath Singh	Lucknow
Ministry of Home Affairs	Amit Shah	Gandhinagar
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways & Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium enterprises	Nitin Gadkari	Nagpur
Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers	DV Sadananda Gowda	Bangalore North
Ministry of Finance & Ministry of Corporate Affairs	Nirmala Sitharaman	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Consumer affairs, food and public distribution	Ram Vilas Paswan	NA
Ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Narendra Singh Tomar	Morena
Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of communications & Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	Ravi Shankar Prasad	Patna Sahib
Ministry of Food Processing Industries	Harsimrat Kaur Badal	Bathinda
Ministry of Social justice and empowerment	Thaawar Chand Gehlot	RS
Ministry of External Affairs	Dr Subrahmanyam	RS (Gujarat)

	Jaishankar	
Ministry of Human Resource Development	Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'	Haridwar
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	Arjun Munda	Khunti
Ministry of Women and child Development & Ministry of Textiles	Smriti Zubin Irani	Amethi
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Science and Technology & Ministry of Earth Sciences	Dr Harsh Vardhan	Chandni Chowk
Ministry of environment, forest and climate change & Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise	Prakash Javadekar	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Railways & Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Piyush Goyal	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Ministry of Steel	Dharmendra Pradhan	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Minority Affairs	Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of coal & Ministry of Mines	Pralhad Joshi	Dharwad
Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey	Chandauli
Ministry of Animal Husbandry, dairying and fisheries	Giriraj Singh	Begusarai

Important International News

United Nations adopts political declaration on women's rights

- United Nations has adopted a **political declaration** on women's rights that seeks to preserve gains under threat but does not advocate new ways to ensure progress toward equality.
- The declaration was adopted during the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which has been drastically reduced from a two-week affair to a single hours-long meeting because of the global coronavirus outbreak.
- The adopted text follows the main lines of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995**, which sought to promote women's emancipation and advancement around the world.

- The declaration expresses the UN's concern that "overall, progress has not been fast or deep enough, that in some areas progress has been uneven, and that major gaps remain."
- They also pledge to fight against "**human trafficking** and **modern slavery** and other forms of exploitation," and to ensure just treatment and provide support services for "all women victims of violence."
- A UN declaration on women is approved every **five years**.

United Nations urges USD 2.5 trillion as coronavirus pandemic aid to developing nations

- The **United Nations (UN)** called for a **USD 2.5-trillion** aid package to help developing countries weather the COVID-19 pandemic, **including debt cancellation** and a **health recovery "Marshal Plan"**.
- A report from the **United Nations Conference on Trade, Investment and Development (UNCTAD)** noted that two-thirds of the global population who live in developing countries (excluding China) face "unprecedented economic damage" from the crisis.
- It is a matter of immediate urgency for the international community to co-ordinate appropriate economic rescue packages with a more global reach to address the looming financing gap which many developing countries are now imminently facing, the report stated.
- In the two months since COVID-19 began spreading beyond China, developing countries have been hit hard by capital outflows, currency depreciations, and lost export earnings, notably from falling commodity prices and declining tourist revenues.
- In most areas, the impact is worse than during the 2008 financial crisis, UNCTAD stated.

Facebook pledges \$100 million to support journalism amid Covid-19 pandemic

- **Facebook** announced a **\$100 million** investment to support journalism during the **global coronavirus pandemic**.
- The grants included **\$25 million** in emergency grant funding for local news through the Facebook Journalism Project. It also included a **\$75 million** in marketing "to get money to publishers around the world at a time when their advertising revenue is declining," Facebook had stated.
- The grant is to support journalism, especially local news which is hit by loss in ad revenue due to the pandemic.
- According to a Reuters report, the ad industry could lose nearly \$26 billion in revenue or a 10.6 per cent decline due to the pandemic.

The US announce financial assistance of 174 million US Dollars to 64 countries including 2.9 million US Dollars to India

- The **United States** has announced financial assistance of **174 million US Dollars** to 64 countries **including 2.9 million US Dollars** to India to help fight the Corona virus pandemic. This is in addition to the 100 million US Dollars aid announced by the US in February.
- The funding is for **64** of the most at-risk countries facing the threat of the global pandemic.
- The US State Department stated, it is providing **2.9 million US Dollars** to help the Indian government prepare laboratory systems, activate case finding and event-based surveillance and support technical experts for response and preparedness and more.

- In another development, President Trump signed the largest-ever financial stimulus package, worth **2 trillion US Dollars** to tackle the economic distress caused by the COVID 19 pandemic.
- The House of Representatives passed the cross-party bill approving the package by voice vote following a three-hour debate.

North Macedonia Officially Joins NATO

- North Macedonia became **NATO's newest member** with the presentation of its "**instrument of accession**" to the U.S. State Department in Washington D.C., NATO stated in a statement from its headquarters in Brussels.
- North Macedonia was granted a protocol on accession to NATO membership in February 2019 after a 2017 agreement with Greece that changed the former Yugoslav republic's name from Macedonia, resolving a decades-long dispute between Skopje and Athens.
- Since then, all NATO-member parliaments have voted to ratify the country's membership, and Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski on March 20 signed the final accession document for the country's entry into the alliance.
- **North Macedonia** is now part of the NATO family, a family of 30 nations and almost 1 billion people. A family based on the certainty that, no matter what challenges we face, we are all stronger and safer together, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated.

North Korea 'successfully' tests 'super-large' multiple rocket launcher

- The two short-range projectiles fired by **North Korea** were a test of a '**super-large' multiple rocket launcher**, the South Korean Yonhap News Agency reports.
- According to the North's official newspaper, the test was carried out in order to "verify strategic and technical characteristics of a super-large multiple rocket launcher once again."
- According to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), two projectiles were launched from North Korea's eastern town of Wonsan in the direction of the Sea of Japan; they flew 230 kilometers (about 143 miles). The maximum altitude was 30 kilometers (18 miles).

Donald Trump signs \$2 trillion coronavirus bill, largest ever US stimulus

- **US President Donald Trump** signed into law the historic **\$2 trillion rescue package** to help the Americans and secure the country's economy ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic that has infected nearly 100,000 people across the nation.
- The legislation among other things gives \$3,400 for most of the American families of four, and billions of dollars' worth of financial assistance to small and medium businesses, and big corporations like Boeing.
- The hard-won plan will provide a massive injection of loans, tax breaks and direct payments to large corporations, small businesses and individuals whose revenue and income have plummeted under "social distancing" restrictions meant to slow the virus' spread.
- The US has become the worldwide epicenter of the epidemic, with more than 97,000 people infected, surpassing China.

- The package provides roughly **\$500 billion** in loans and other assistance for major companies, including **\$62 billion** for the airline sector, as well as cities and states struggling with virus-related financial burdens.

IMF is Launching a Tracker of Policies Governments are Taking in Response to COVID-19

- Governments around the world are taking decisive steps to limit the **human** and **economic impact** of **COVID-19**. Many countries have taken extraordinary monetary and fiscal policy measures.
- IMF launching a policy tracker to help our member countries be more aware of the experiences of others in combating the pandemic, and in adapting various policies and practices to their unique circumstances and needs. Sharing knowledge about COVID-19 enables all to tackle the crisis more effectively, stated IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva.
- This **policy tracker** summarizes the key economic responses as of March 24, 2020. The tracker is not meant for comparison across members, as policy responses vary depending on the nature of the shock and country-specific circumstances. The tracker focuses on discretionary actions that supplement existing social safety nets and insurance mechanisms.
- The initial policy tracker includes **the G20** and **European Institutions**. More countries will be added soon, and information will be updated on a regular basis.

UN launches 2 Billion dollar response plan to fight corona

- **United Nations** has launched a **2 billion dollar global humanitarian response plan** to fight Corona Virus in the world's poorest countries.
- UN Secretary General **Antonio Guterres** has warned that the pandemic is threatening the entire human race and all of us must fight back.
- As all nations struggle to combat coronavirus, the UN launched the global response plan, an interagency plan which will be coordinated by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and brings together existing appeals from the World Health Organisation and other UN partners, and identifies new needs as well.

G20 countries pledge \$ 5 trillion funds in the world economy

- To deal with the social, economic as well the **financial impacts** of the **COVID-19**, the **G20 countries** have all decided to put in together **\$ 5 trillion** funds in the **world economy**.
- The leaders got together for an **Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit**, which came close of the heels of the recent video conference PM Modi had with the SAARC leaders to discuss the pandemic. So according to reports, almost 5, 00,000 people across the globe have been infected and around 30,000 death have been reported.
- The meeting was called to discuss the challenges which have been posed due to the spread of COVID-19 and how the world economies could together help developing economies.
- Members of G20, Most of the large economies of the world such as the US, the EU, Australia, Brazil, India, China, Japan, France, Germany, South Korea and South Africa are members.
- Almost all have been hit by the pandemic and besides China, Italy is among those who has been badly affected.

IMF, World Bank call for suspension of debt payments by poorest nations

- The **International Monetary Fund** and **World Bank** called for governments to put a hold on debt payments from the world's poorest nations so they can battle the coronavirus pandemic.
- The World Bank Group and the IMF believe it is imperative at this moment to provide a global sense of relief for developing countries as well as a strong signal to financial markets, the Washington-based development lenders stated in a joint statement.
- The move aims to help countries that are home to two-thirds of the world's population living in extreme poverty -- largely in **sub-Saharan Africa** -- and qualify for the most generous, low-cost loans from the **International Development Association (IDA)** financed by wealthier nations.
- Part of the World Bank, the IDA is one of the largest sources of assistance for the world's 76 poorest countries, providing zero or low interest loans spread over 30 years or more, and grants to some distressed nations.
- In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, IDA commitments totaled \$22 billion, of which 36 percent was provided on grant terms, according to the World Bank.

WHO begins mega trial of 4 promising drugs to cure Covid-19

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has initiated a **global mega trial** of the four most promising drugs that may cure the novel coronavirus. The mega trial is called **Solidarity**, under which the study, testing, and development of antidote against coronavirus will be made, as per the Science Magazine report.
- While many scientists have recommended dozens of existing compounds for testing, WHO is focusing on what it says are the four most promising therapies: an experimental antiviral compound called **remdesivir**; the malaria medications **chloroquine** and **hydroxychloroquine**; a combination of two HIV drugs, **lopinavir** and **ritonavir**; and that same combination plus **interferon-beta**, an immune system messenger that can help cripple viruses. **'Solidarity'** will also test this drug, which is also being used to treat Middle-East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS) patients in Saudi Arabia.

U.S. Senate, White House agree on \$2 trillion Coronavirus rescue plan

- The White House and Senate leaders of both parties announced agreement on **unprecedented emergency legislation** to rush sweeping aid to businesses, workers and a health care system slammed by the coronavirus pandemic.
- The urgently needed pandemic response measure is the largest economic rescue measure in history and is intended as a weeks- or months-long patch for an economy spiraling into recession and a nation facing a potentially ghastly toll.
- Top White House aide Eric Ueland announced the agreement in a Capitol hallway shortly after midnight, capping days of often intense haggling and mounting pressure. It still needs to be finalized in detailed legislative language.
- The unprecedented economic rescue package would give direct payments to most Americans, expand unemployment benefits and provide a **\$367 billion program** for small businesses to keep making payroll while workers are forced to stay home.

US successfully tests hypersonic missile in bid to catch up with China and Russia

- The **United States** announced it has successfully tested an **unarmed prototype of a hypersonic missile**, a nuclear-capable weapon that could accelerate the arms race between superpowers.
- The Pentagon stated a **test glide vehicle** flew at hypersonic speeds – more than five times the speed of sound, or Mach 5 – to a designated impact point.
- The test followed the first joint US Army and Navy flight experiment in October 2017, when the prototype missile demonstrated it could glide in the direction of a target at hypersonic speed.
- Hypersonic weapons can take missile warfare, particularly nuclear warfare, to a new – and, for many, frightening – level.
- They can travel much faster than current nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles at low altitudes, can switch direction in flight and do not follow a predictable arc like conventional missiles, making them much harder to track and intercept.

SAARC Disaster Management Centre launches website for information related to COVID- 19

- The **SAARC Disaster Management Centre** has launched a website for information related to the **COVID-19** pandemic in the region. The website shows the number of coronavirus cases in the member states while updating the numbers regularly. SAARC Disaster Management Centre launches website for information related to COVID- 19
The website is **www.covid19-sdmc.org**
- Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed it during the recent video conference with leaders and representatives of the member states. The website shows that at least 960 coronavirus cases have been reported in the SAARC region. It says that at least five people have lost their lives in India, three in Pakistan, while two died in Bangladesh due to COVID-19

Bangladesh contributes Dollar 1.5 million to COVID 19 Emergency fund of SAARC

- **Bangladesh** announced that it will contribute **Dollar 1.5 million** to the proposed **Corona emergency fund** for the prevention and combat of COVID-19 pandemic in the **SAARC region**. The idea of an emergency fund to fight COVID-19 outbreak in the region was mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his video conferencing with SAARC leaders on 15th March
- Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. AK Abdul Momen stated that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the fund for SAARC secretariat to face the outbreak of Corona virus in South Asia,
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced on 8th March that India will contribute dollar **10 million** to the fund. Other countries of SAARC like Nepal and Afghanistan have pledged **1 million dollar** each while **Maldives** will contribute **2 lakh dollars** and **Bhutan 1 lakh dollar** to the emergency fund

Online Tawajudi service introduced to help residents overseas re-enter UAE

- In **United Arab Emirates**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation introduced a new service on its website: "**Tawajudi for residents**".
- The new service is intended for residents with valid residencies and who are outside the country. This service aims to facilitate their safe return to the UAE in emergency situations.

- Residents who are currently abroad can register for this service through the website, thus facilitating communication with them in case of emergency.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation stated that UAE is keen to ensure the health and safety of residents on its land and facilitate their return to the country in emergency cases.
- UAE had earlier announced that it had suspended the entry of all its valid residence visa holders, who are currently out of the country, for a renewable period of two weeks effective from 19th March, due to the spread of COVID-19. Expatriates of 180 nationalities including Indians are staying in the UAE.

Maldives pledges USD 200,000 to COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund

- **Maldives government** has committed **two lakh US dollars** for COVID -19 emergency relief fund created for **SAARC nations**
- Foreign minister Abdulla Shahid stated in a message that Maldives welcome PM Narendra Modi's initiative to create the fund and pledge the amount to address issues emanating from COVID-19. The decision was taken at meeting of National task force on Covid-19 headed by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.
- The meeting also commended doctors, nurses and everyone involved for their hard work in full recovery of the first two infected patients in the country. An Indian medical team has reached early this month to help local authorities address the crisis

World Bank, ADB give USD 588 million to Pakistan to fight coronavirus pandemic

- The **World Bank** and the **Asian Development Bank** have committed to providing **USD 588 million** to **Pakistan** for its emergency response to fight the coronavirus and to address the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic,
- According to an official statement, the **World Bank** would provide **USD 238 million** and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** **USD 350 million** to **Pakistan** in support for the COVID-19 emergency response and to tackle the socio-economic disruption associated with it.
- The announcement was made by the Planning Commission after a meeting with representatives of the two lending agencies on Pakistan's preparedness and response to fight COVID-19
- The meeting also approved in principle a project concept "**Pakistan National Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19**"

UAE suspends all types of labour permits

- The **UAE Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation** has suspended the issuance of all types of **labour permits**, including for drivers and domestic workers, effective from i.e 19th March 2020, until further notice.
- The decision however, exempts intra-corporate transfer and EXPO 2020 permits. The UAE government stated the move has been taken in coordination with the National Emergency and Crisis and Disasters Management Authority as part of the precautionary measures taken by the UAE to curb the spread of COVID-19

India gets \$1-million materials requests from SAARC nations

- The Ministry of External Affairs stated that requests for material assistance received by India from the **SAARC** nations in the forms of masks, gloves and disinfectants have crossed **\$1 million**, in the wake of the outbreak of **Covid-19**. While materials have already been sent to Bhutan and the Maldives, deliveries to other nations will start soon.
- Additional secretary and coordinator for Covid-19 Dammu Ravi stated the special control rooms set up by the MEA are being further strengthened to enhance efficiency of the response to specific issues of specific countries. The control rooms have been equipped with dedicated helplines that are operating 24x7 to respond to the concerns in a secure and timely manner.
- These control rooms are staffed by 25-30 people working in 8-hour shifts to deal with the issues. The control rooms have attended to 1,355 calls and 522 emails since the evening of March 17.

Sri Lanka gets USD 500 million loan from China as financial aid

- China has provided **USD 500 million loan** to **Sri Lanka** from its development bank to help the country's economy.
- China's Central Bank this week reduced policy interest rates in view of the anticipated coronavirus impact. The Central Bank has felt the urgent need to support economic activity with the rapid global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and its possible further spread in Sri Lanka, a statement stated.
- China is already one of the biggest investors in various infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka. But there has been criticism, both locally and internationally, and growing concerns that China has lured Sri Lanka into a debt trap

World Bank increases COVID-19 response funding to 14 bln USD

- World Bank has announced **14 billion US Dollars** to assist companies and countries in their efforts to respond to the rapid spread of **COVID-19**. It has added **2 billion dollars** to the initial package.
- The announcement came amid fear of a major global recession in the wake of the coronavirus that has impacted more than 120 countries. The package will strengthen national systems for public health preparedness, including for disease containment, diagnosis and treatment, and support the private sector.
- World Bank President **David Malpass** stated, it is essential that we shorten the time to recovery. He added that the World Bank is committed to a fast and flexible response based on the needs of developing countries.

US Africa Command cancels annual military exercise African Lion

- The annual **African Lion** military exercise became the latest casualty of the global novel coronavirus pandemic with this year's event being canceled.
- The **US Africa Command (AFRICOM)** stated, the decision to cancel the exercise was made based on international travel restrictions associated with the novel coronavirus and to minimize the risk of exposure to US and partner nation service members.
- African Lion had been scheduled to take place from March 23 to April 4 in Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal, with nearly 4,000 US service members and about 5,000 troops from Morocco

Bangladesh celebrates birth Centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

- **Bangladesh** is celebrating the birth centenary of its founder President **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina marked the day by paying floral tributes to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his residence in **Dhanmondi** area of **Dhaka**.
- The day marks the beginning of the year long celebration of the birth centenary named '**Mujib Barsho**' in Bangladesh and across the world.
- It will be followed by nationwide telecast of the address by President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The video message of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also be broadcast on the occasion.
- In a message on the eve of the birth centenary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President Abdul Hamid stated that Bangabandhu's principles and ideals will inspire generations. He asked the people of Bangladesh to work for making the country into '**Sonar Bangla**' by completing the unfinished task of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

India to provide 107.01 million Nepali Rupees for three new school buildings in Nepal

- The **Government of India** will provide **107.01 million Nepali Rupees** for three new school buildings in **Nepal**. The schools will be constructed in **Darchula, Dhanusha** and **Kapilvastu** districts.
- The Embassy of India and Nepal's Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with Mahakali Municipality, Darchula and Mukhiyapatti Musharniya Rural Municipality, Dhanusha in Kathmandu for the construction of two new school buildings.
- These schools will be built under the **India-Nepal Development Partnership** program at a total estimated cost of **73.96 million Nepali Rupees**.
- The Government of India has also committed an amount of **33.05 million Nepali Rupees** for the construction of new school buildings for Shivbhari School, Mahrajgunj Municipality in Kapilvastu district.
- The Embassy of India handed over a cheque of **8.26 million Nepali Rupees** as the first installment of its total commitment to the District Coordination Committee Kapilvastu

US Federal Reserve slashes key interest rate to almost zero in wake of economic impact of COVID-19

- The **US Federal Reserve** slashed the key interest rate to **virtually zero** in response to the growing economic impact of the new coronavirus.
- The Fed made its second emergency rate cut in less than two weeks, cutting the benchmark borrowing rate to a range of **0-0.25 percent**.
- The rate was previously at this level during the 2008 global financial crisis. The Fed pledged to keep the rates low until it is confident that the economy has weathered recent events.
- The action was coordinated with the **European Central Bank, Bank of England, Bank of Japan, Bank of Canada** and the **Swiss National Bank**

Iran seeks financial assistance from IMF for the first time since 1962 to counter coronavirus pandemic

- For the first time since 1962, the **Islamic Republic of Iran** is seeking financial assistance from the **International Monetary Fund**.

- Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif announced that the Ministry had written a letter to IMF Chief Kristalina Georgieva seeking a loan to help contain the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in the country through IMF's Rapid Financial Instrument.
- IMF's KGeorgieva has stated that countries affected by **#COVID19** will be supported via **Rapid Financial Instrument**. Central Bank requested access to this facility immediately.
- The efforts by Iran's medical personnel have been "stymied by vast shortages caused by restrictions" on Iran's access to medicine, equipment Zarif had further stated, referring to US sanctions on Iran.
- Iran's Health Minister Abdolnasser Hemmati also took to Instagram to share a letter that he had written to IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva seeking financial assistance of "**about \$5 billion**" from the fund.
- This is the first time since the Islamic Revolution that the country is seeking assistance from the IMF.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has infected over 10,000 people in Iran with the death toll rising to 429, according to media reports

World Health Organization declares Covid-19 as a pandemic

- **World Health Organization (WHO)** has characterised the new coronavirus outbreak as a **pandemic**. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva that he is alarmed by the spread and severity of the outbreak, along with a lack of action taken to combat it.
- WHO chief stated the number of cases and deaths are likely to rise in the coming days and weeks. He stated, WHO has never before seen a pandemic sparked by a coronavirus.
- UN chief Antonio Guterres has urged world governments to urgently scale up their response to the novel coronavirus if they are to stand a chance of stemming its spread. UN Secretary General stated, the declaration of coronavirus outbreak as a **pandemic** is a call to action - for everyone, everywhere.

UN Security Council unanimously approves US Taliban peace agreement

- United Nations Security Council has unanimously approved a United States' resolution on the recent deal between the **US** and the **Afghan Taliban**, a rare endorsement of an agreement with a militant group. The US military has begun withdrawing troops as part of the pullout agreed in the February 29 pact with the Taliban.
- In the resolution, the Security Council urged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to advance the peace process, including by participating in intra-Afghan negotiations through a diverse and inclusive negotiating team composed of Afghan political and civil society leaders, including women.
- The United States is keen to end its longest-ever conflict and under the terms of a deal signed in Doha last month all foreign forces would quit Afghanistan within 14 months -- provided the Taliban stick to their security commitments.

Two new land ports to be added as entry points for Bangladeshis: High Commissioner Riva Ganguly Das

- Bangladeshi citizens travelling to India will have the option of two more land port entry points on their visas.
- The Bangladeshi visitors to India will be able to enter India from **Bhomra** and **Akhaura** side of Bangladesh connecting **Gojadanga** and **Agartala** respectively on Indian side.

- Presently with a normal visa Bangladeshi people can travel to India from only two land ports **Benapole** and **Petrapole** apart from the travel by air and rail.
- This was announced by the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh Riva Ganguly Das when she visited the office of the newspaper Prothom Alo in Dhaka.
- The other decision about increasing the frequency of **Bandhan Express** and **Maitree Express** trains has already been implemented.

Sri Lanka to lead science, technology and innovation sector in BIMSTEC

- Sri Lanka will lead the **science, technology and innovation sector** in the **BIMSTEC** and a facility for technology transfer is planned to be opened in the future. This was agreed during the 20th Session of the senior officials' meeting chaired by Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Ravinatha Aryasinha in Colombo.
- Foreign Secretary Aryasinha stated, Sri Lanka stated that Sri Lanka had focused on the need for institutional building through the finalization of the BIMSTEC charter and the allocation of defined areas of cooperation among the member states.
- He added that Sri Lanka scheduled to hand over the chairmanship to Thailand later this year is keen for cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, technology, tourism and connectivity, ahead of the summit, scheduled later this year.

Luxembourg becomes first country to make all public transport free

- In an attempt to reduce traffic jams, **Luxembourg** has become the first country in the world to make all public transport free from February 29. This is the first time that the decision to offer free public transport has covered an entire country, the transport ministry stated.
- The decision has been observed in Luxembourg so as to bring down the congestion on streets. As a result of this decision, every person will be able to save around 100 euros (\$110) per year.
- The free public transport system, however, does not include first-class travel tickets on trains and certain night bus services.
- People mostly travel in Luxembourg in their private cars while as per a survey conducted in 2018, bus is only used for 32 per cent of trips to work. Trains, on the other hand, account for 19 per cent.

China assumes presidency of UN Security Council for March 2020

- China has taken over as **president of the UN Security Council** for the month of March 2020, pledging to promote solidarity and cooperation in this capacity. China's permanent representative to the UN, **Zhang Jun** stated his country attaches great importance to the work during its presidency and will act responsibly and constructively.
- China will make an effort to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with all parties to ensure that the council fulfills its responsibility and plays a constructive role in maintaining international peace and security, Zhang stated.
- The Security Council was established by the UN Charter. Its primary responsibility is to work to maintain international peace and security. The council has 15 members: the five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms. The council's presidency is a capacity that rotates every month among its 15 members

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu claims victory in general elections

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed victory in the general elections. Exit polls indicated that Mr Netanyahu is in a strong position to form the next government.
- The election, Israel's third in less than a year, was called after inconclusive votes in April and September plunged the Jewish state into a political stalemate

Saudi Arabia starts issuance of permanent premium residency permit to foreigners

- As Saudi Arabia started the issuance of **Permanent Premium Residency Permit** to Foreigners, Indian investor Yosuffali M A, Chairman of the Lulu group became one of the first to be given the permanent residency permit by **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**.
- The Premium Residency, informally known as Saudi Green Card, is a residence permit in Saudi Arabia that grants expatriates the right to live, work and own business and property in the Kingdom without need for a sponsor.
- The introduction of the Premium Residency comes as a part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reform plan, which was announced by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to boost the Saudi economy.
- This initiative of Saudi Arabia is to target key investors and prominent personalities from various fields including sports, arts and culture, who have played a defining role in the nation-building process

World Bank announces 12 bn aid package to help countries combat coronavirus outbreak

- **World Bank** has unveiled a **12 billion dollar aid** package that will provide fast-track funds to help countries combat the coronavirus outbreak. World Bank President David Malpass told reporters that the goal is to provide fast, effective action that responds to country needs.
- The funds, some of which are targeted to the world's poorest nations, can be used for medical equipment or health services and will include expertise and policy advice.

Indian-American Seema Verma named as key member of coronavirus task force in US

- Leading **Indian-American health policy consultant Seema Verma** has been appointed as one of the key members of the **White House Coronavirus Task Force** constituted by US President Donald Trump to combat the deadly disease that has claimed six lives in the country and infected over 90 others.
- The task force led by Secretary, Health and Human Services Alex Azar, was created by President Trump on January 30 to lead his administration's response to the deadly virus that emerged in China and has wreaked havoc across the globe.

UN appeals for USD 877 million to help Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

- The United Nations appealed for nearly **USD 900 million** to help hundreds of thousands of **Rohingya refugees** and vulnerable host communities in Bangladesh this year.
- The UN refugee agency and the International Organization for Migration and other partners launched a joint appeal for **USD 877 million** (789 million euros).

- The requested funds would go to cover vital services like food, shelter and sanitation, as well as healthcare, education and protection services, it stated.
- Bangladesh and Myanmar have already signed a repatriation deal to send back some Rohingya to their homeland -- but safety fears mean very few have agreed to return.
- The Myanmar military launched a ferocious crackdown against the country's Rohingya Muslim population in 2017, which UN investigators called genocide, driving around 740,000 into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Revision Points

Country	Capital	Currency	Head
Spain	Madrid	Euro	Pedro Sanchez
Maldives	Male	Rufiyaa	Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
France	Paris	Euro	Emmanuel Macron
Bangladesh	Dhaka	Taka	Abdul Hamid
Germany	Berlin	Euro	Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Iraq	Baghdad	Dinar	Barham Salih
United Kingdom	London	Pound Sterling	Boris Johnson
Bhutan	Thimphu	Ngultrum	Lotay Tshering
UAE	Abu Dhabi	Dirham	Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Sri Lanka	Colombo	Rupee	Gotabaya Rajapaksa
Norway	Oslo	Krone	Erna Solberg
Myanmar	Naypyitaw	Kyat	Win Myint
Thailand	Bangkok	Baht	Prayut Chan-o-cha
USA	Washington D.C	Dollar	Donald Trump
Sweden	Stockholm	Krona	Stefan Lofven
Iran	Tehran	Rial	Hassan Rouhani
North Korea	Pyongyang	Won	Kim Jae-ryong
North Macedonia	Skopje	Denar	Stevo Pendarovski
Nepal	Kathmandu	Rupee	Bidhya Devi Bhandari
South Africa	Cape Town	Rand	Cyril Ramaphosa
Israel	Jerusalem	Shekel	Benjamin Netanyahu
Afghanistan	Kabul	Afghani	Ashraf Ghani
Pakistan	Islamabad	Rupee	Arif Alvi
Kosovo	Prishtina	Euro	Hashim Thaci
South Korea	Seoul	Won	Moon Jae-in
France	Paris	CFA Franc	Edouard Philippe

Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	Ringgit	Abdullah of Pahang
Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	Riyal	Mohammed Bin Salman
China	Beijing	Renminbi	Xi Jinping
Japan	Tokyo	Yen	Shinzo Abe
Turkey	Ankara	Lira	Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Ukraine	Kyiv	Hryvnia	Volodymyr Zelensky
Slovenia	Ljubljana	Euro	Borut Pahor

Important Appointments

National Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor
Ajay Tyagi	Chairman, SEBI (Extension of Period)	
Pekka Lundmark	CEO, Nokia	Rajeev Suri
Dayapatra Nevatia	Chief Operating Officer, Mindtree	
Sudhanshu Pandey	CMD, MMTc	Ved Prakash
Ajay Bhusha Pandey (Revenue Secretary)	Union Finance Secretary	
Sridhar Venkatesh	MD & Vice President, GSK India	
Sunil Joshi	Chairman, National Selection Panel, BCCI	
Amrish Rau	CEO, Pine Labs	
Kareena Kapoor	Brand Ambassador, Puma	
Sanjeev Nautiyal	MD, CEO of SBI Life Insurance	
Bimal Julka	Chief Information Commissioner	
Anurag Mehrotra	CEO, Mahindra-Ford JV	
Nupur Kulshrestha	DIG of Indian Coast Guard.	
Chalasani Venkat Nageswar	Deputy mD & Chief Financial officer, State Bank of India	
Lt Gen KJS Dhillon	Director General Defence Intelligence Agency and Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Intelligence)	
Amitabh Bachchan	Brand Ambassador of IDFC First Bank	
Debasish Panda	Nominated on the Central Board of RBI	
Baseer Ahmad Khan	Advisor to Lt. Governor	
Bansi Lal Bhat	Member (Judicial) of the National Company Law	Justice (Retd) S J

	Appellate Tribunal	Mukhopadhaya.
Ravinder Singh Dhillon	Chairman and Managing Director, Power Finance Corporation	
Rajiv Bajaj	Managing Director, Bajaj Auto	
Noel Quinn	Permanent Chief Executive, HSBC	
Karan Bajwa	Managing Director, Google Cloud in India	
Ashwani Lohani	Chairman, AP Tourism Development Corporation	
Janani Narayanan and Vrinda Rathi	International Panel of ICC Development Umpires	
R Gandhi and Ananth Narayan Gopalakrishnan	Additional Directors, YES Bank	
Sumant Kathpalia	MD & CEO, IndusInd Bank	Romesh Sobti
Shivraj Singh Chouhan	Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh	Kamal Nath
Sameer Aggarwal	Chief Executive Officer, Walmart India	Krishlyer
Parthasarathy	Chairman, Mahindra Logistics	ZhoobenBhiwandiwala
Krishan Mohan Prasad & Satish Kumar Gupta	Members of Centrl Board of Direct Taxes	
BP Kanungo	Deputy Governor of RBI	One of the 4 Deputy Governors

International Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor
Muhyiddin Yasin	Prime Minister, Malaysia	
Sanjay Kumar Panda	India's Ambassador to Turkey	
Janez Jansa	Prime Minister of Slovenia	
Daren Tang	Director General, WIPO	Francis Gurry
Denys Shmygal	Prime Minister, Ukraine	Oleksiy Honcharuk
Ashraf Ghani	President, Afghanistan	2 nd Term
Adnan al-Zurfi	Prime Minister, Iraq	

Resignation/Retirement

Name of the Person	Designation
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NS Vishwanathan	Deputy Governor of RBI
Bill Gates	Board of Director, Warren E. Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway
Arundhati Bhattacharya (Former SBI Chief)	Independent Director, CRISIL Board
Kamal Nath	Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh

Former India spinner Sunil Joshi named BCCI's selection committee chairman

- Former India spinner **Sunil Joshi** was named **chairman of the national selection panel** by the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) in **Mumbai**.
- A statement from BCCI Secretary Jay Shah stated, the CAC also picked ex-pacer **Harvinder Singh** for a place in the five-member group. The CAC, comprising Madan Lal, RP Singh and Sulakshana Naik, picked the two selectors with Joshi replacing South Zone representative MSK Prasad.
- Harvinder was chosen from the central zone and replaces **Gagan Khoda** in the panel. In an unprecedented decision, the BCCI stated the CAC will review the panel's performance after one year and make recommendations accordingly.
- The CAC had shortlisted five candidates from a list of 40 applicants for interviews. The other three shortlisted candidates were Venkatesh Prasad, Rajesh Chauhan and LS Sivaramakrishnan.

Yes Bank Board Of Directors Reconstituted; Administrator Prashant Kumar Named As MD & CEO

- **Yes Bank** revealed that its Board of Directors had been reconstituted .This has been done as per the '**Yes Bank Limited Reconstruction Scheme, 2020**' notified by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- **Prashant Kumar**, the RBI-appointed administrator of the bank has been named **as the new Managing Director and CEO of Yes Bank**. Apart from **R Gandhi and AnanthGopalakrishnan** who were appointed by the RBI, other members on the **Board of Directors** include **Sunil Mehta as non-executive Chairman** and **Mahesh Krishnamurti and AtulBhedaas non-executive Directors**.
- Meanwhile, **Partha Sengupta and Swaminathan Janakiraman** have been nominated by the State Bank of India on the **Board of Directors**.

Govt constitutes high level committee of medical experts for prevention & control of COVID-19

- The government has constituted a **high level technical committee** of Public Health Experts for **COVID-19** to guide the prevention and control activities in the country.
- The **21 member committee** will be headed by NITI Aayog member **Dr V K Paul**. Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan and Director General Indian Council of Medical Research are the Co-Chair.
- Besides, Director, AIIMS, Dr. RandeepGuleria, Director of National Centre for Disease Control, Delhi Dr Sujeet Singh, Director of Institute of Infectious Diseases, Pune Dr Sanjay Pujari and Additional Chief Secretary of Kerala Dr RajanKhobragade are among the members of the Task Force.

Anurag Mehrotra to take charge of Mahindra-Ford JV as CEO

- **Anurag Mehrotra**, a key architect of **Ford** India's alliance with **Mahindra & Mahindra**, is set to take over as the **chief executive** of their joint venture on April 1.
- Mahindra also said its chief of powertrain engineering and business development, **Pankaj Sonalkar**, would become the **chief operating officer** of the JV. Already, Ford India's sourcing head, **Raghu Veeraraghavan**, has joined Mahindra as the head of **strategic sourcing** and he would steer sourcing for a nine-product portfolio being planned by the partners.
- **Sachin Arolkar** has been named the **chief financial officer** of the JV and **Abhimanyu Sen** the **HR head**, according to the internal email.

Sunil Mehta to be Non-Executive Chairman, Prashant Kumar to be MD & CEO of YES Bank

- The Government has constituted new board of directors for **Yes Bank**. It will be led by former Punjab National Bank Managing Director **Sunil Mehta**.
- According to the notification, issued within hours of Union Cabinet's decision, the new board of director will have **Mehta** as **Non-Executive Chairman** while **Prashant Kumar**, former **Chief Financial Officer** and Deputy Managing Director of State Bank of India, will be Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director.
- **Mahesh Krishnamurthy** and **Atul Bheda** have been appointed as Non-Executive Director. The board will replace the administrator (Kumar) who is to vacate office within seven calendar days from the date of notification , all the board members will have a term of one year or until an alternate board is constituted.

Important Awards and Honours

Winner	Prize	Awarded By/Theme
Jadav Paeng (Forest Man of India)	Swami Vivekananda Karmayogi Award	My Home India
Amarinder Singh	Ideal CM Award (Adarsh Mukhya Mantri Puraskar)	Bhartiya Chhatra Sansad
Jadev Payeng	128th Commonwealth Points of Light Award	
Farrell, McNamara	2020 Pritzker Architecture Prize	for service to humanity as evidenced by a body of built work
V Praveen Rao (Telangana Agri Varsity)	7th Dr MS Swaminathan Award for the period 2017-2019	
Maker Village Kochi	ISGF (India Smart Grid Forum) Award	
Mangaluru International Airport	Best airport by size and region	'2-5 million passengers per year in Asia-Pacific region category'

Dr Jaimanti Bakshi	Best Citizens of India Gold medal Award	Global Economic Progress and Research Association
Rohini Mohan and <i>The Wire's</i> Arfa Khanum Sherwani	2019 Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Women Mediaperson	
Hillel Furstenberg & Gregory Margulis	Abel Prize	For pioneering the use of methods from probability and dynamics in group theory, number theory and combinatorics
Tell Her Everything by Mirza Waheed	The Hindu Prize (fiction)	
India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs by Santanu Das	The Hindu Prize (Non-Fiction)	

Sarbananda Sonowal receives Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee Award 2020 for Politics

- **Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** was presented the prestigious **Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee award 2020 for Politics** at the 6th India Ideas Conclave.
- The award was presented at Tent City Narmada in Gujarat.
- The award, instituted by India Foundation, was presented to Chief Minister Sonowal by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Speaker of People's Majlis of Maldives Mohamed Nasheed.
- The award carries a citation, a specially designed trophy and a cheque worth **Rs one lakh**

Winner	Category	Field
Sarbananda Sonowal	Dr S P Mukherjee Award	Politics
K Parasaran	Sree Narayana Guru Award	Social Work
Bharatbala	Ustad Bismillah Khan Award	Culture
N K Singh	Dr B R Shenoy Award	Economics

70th Berlin International Film Festival

- The **70th edition of Berlin International Film Festival** (Berlinale) 2020 was held in **Berlin, Germany**.
- The Opening film of the festival was '**My Salinger Year**' and the Closing film was '**There Is No Evil**'.
- Jury President is **Jeremy Irons**

Category	Winner
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Golden Bear for Best Film	There Is No Evil by Mohammad Rasoulof
Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize	Never Rarely Sometimes Always by Eliza Hittman
Silver Bear for Best Director	Hong Sang Soo for The Woman Who Ran
Silver Bear for Best Actress	Paula Beer for Undine
Silver Bear for Best Actor	Elio Germano for "Hidden Away"
Silver Bear for Best Screenplay	Favolacce by Fabio D'Innocenzo and Damiano D'Innocenzo
Silver Bear for Outstanding Artistic Contribution	Jürgen Jürges for cinematography on DAU. Natasha
Silver Bear Special Prize	Delete History by Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern
Best Film in the Encounters Competition	The Works and Days (of Tayoko Shiojiri in the Shiotani Basin) by C.W. Winter and Anders Edström
Special Jury Award in the Encounters Competition	The Trouble With Being Born by Sandra Wollner
Best Director in the Encounters Competition	Cristi Puiu for Malmkrog
Special Mention by the Encounters Jury	Isabella, Matías Piñeiro
Berlinale Documentary Award	Irradiés by Rithy Panh
Special Mention by the Jury for the Berlinale Documentary Award	Notes From the Underworld by Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel
Special Mention by the GWFF Best First Feature Award Jury	Nackte Tiere, Melanie Waelde
GWFF Best First Feature Award	Los conductos by Camilo Restrepo
Golden Bear for Best Short Film	"T" by Keisha Rae Witherspoon
Audi Short Film Award	Genius Loci by Adrien Mérieau
Silver Bear Jury Prize (Short Film)	Filipiñana by Rafael Manuel
Special Mention of the International Jury Generation Kplus	The Kites by Seyed Payam Hosseini
Special Prize of the International Jury in Generation Kplus for the Best Short Film	El nombre del hijo by Martina Matzkin

Grand Prix of the International Jury in Generation Kplus for the Best Film	Los Lobos by Samuel Kishi Leopo
Special Mentions of the International Jury Generation Kplus	Mignonnes by Maimouna Doucouré; Mamá, mamá, mama by Sol Berruezo Pichon-Rivière
Panorama Audience Award for Best Documentary	Welcome to Chechnya
Panorama Audience Award for Best Feature Film	Otac by Srdan Golubović
Compass-Perspektive-Award	Walchensee Forever by Janna Ji Wonders

PM Modi will be treated with highest honour during Bangladesh visit

- Foreign Minister of Bangladesh **Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen** has stated that **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will be treated with the **highest honour** during his forthcoming visit to Bangladesh to attend the Mujib Centenary Celebrations.
- The Bangladesh govt has invited Prime Minister Modi as the premier of India, which was its closest ally during the liberation war.

Novelist RuchikaTomar Wins 2020 Pen/Hemingway Award For Her Debut Novel 'A Prayer ForTravelers'

- Critically-acclaimed debut novelist **RuchikaTomar** is the winner of the **2020PEN/Hemingway Award** for Debut Novel, for **A Prayer for Travelers (Riverhead)**.
- Honoring a distinguished first novel, the PEN/Hemingway Award includes a \$25,000 prize intended to allow significant time and resources with which to pursue a subsequent work of fiction. The prize is underwritten by the Hemingway family and the Ernest Hemingway Foundation.
- Tomar will also receive a month-long Residency Fellowship at the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming, a retreat for artists and writers, valued at \$10,000.
- Tomar joins other notable PEN/Hemingway winners and honorees including Marilynne Robinson, Edward P. Jones, JhumpaLahiri, Colson Whitehead, Tommy Orange, Jennifer Haigh, ZZ Packer, George Saunders, Ha Jin, Yiyun Li, Teju Cole, and OttessaMoshfegh—a four-decade lineage of literary excellence founded in 1976 by Mary Hemingway, the widow of Ernest Hemingway, to honor her late husband and draw attention to debut novels.
- The two PEN/Hemingway Award runners-up are *Stay and Fight* by Madeline ffitich (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), and *The Travelers* by Regina Porter (Hogarth). Alongside finalists *99 Nights in Logar* by Jamil Jan Kochai and *Big Familia* by Tomas Moniz, all finalists and runners-up for the prize will receive a Residency Fellowship at the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming.

Critics' Choice Film Awards: Ranveer Singh wins for Gully Boy, Geetika Vidya Ohlyan wins Best Actress for Soni

- **Critics' Choice Film Awards** for Best Film, Best Actor (Male), Best Actor (Female), Best Director and Best Writing for releases in Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi and Gujarati languages, too.

Hindi

Best Actor Male	Ranveer Singh (Gully Boy)
Best Actor Female	Geetika Vidya Ohlyan (Soni)
Best Director	Zoya Akhtar (Gully Boy)
Best Film	Gully Boy
Best Writing	Anubhav Sinha and Gaurav Solanki (Article 15)

Telugu

Best Actor Male	Nani (Jersey)
Best Actor Female	Samantha Akkineni (Oh! Baby)
Best Director	Gowtam Tinnanuri (Jersey)
Best Film	Malleshham
Best Writing	Vivek Athreya (Brochevarevarura)

Tamil

Best Actor Male	Vijay Sethupathi (Super Deluxe)
Best Actor Female	Amala Paul (Aadai)
Best Director	Thiagararajan Kumararaja (Super Deluxe)
Best Film	Super Deluxe
Best Writing	Thiagararajan Kumararaja, Nalan Kumaraswamy, Mysskin, Neelan K Sekar (Super Deluxe)

Bengali

Best Actor Male	Kaushik Ganguly (Kedara)
Best Actor Female	Swastika Mukherjee (Kia and Cosmos)
Best Director	Atanu Ghosh (Robibaar)
Best Film	Kedara
Best Writing	Atanu Ghosh (Robibaar)

Gujarati

Best Actor Male	Jayesh More (Hellaro)
Best Actor Female	Deeksha Joshi (Dhunki)
Best Director	Abhishek Shah (Hellaro)
Best Film	Hellaro
Best Writing	Abhishek Shah, Prateek Gupta, Saumya Joshi (Hellaro)

Kannada

Best Actor Male	Rishi (Kavaludaari)
Best Actor Female	B. Jayashree (Mookajjiya Kanasugalu)
Best Director	Jayathirtha (Bell Bottom)
Best Film	Bell Bottom
Best Writing	Dayananda T K (Bell Bottom)

Malayalam

Best Actor Male	Mammootty (Unda)
Best Actor Female	Parvathy (Uyare)
Best Director	Aashiq Abu (Virus)
Best Film	Kumbalangi Nights
Best Writing	Syam Pushkaran (Kumbalangi Nights)

Marathi

Best Actor Male	Sandeep Kulkarni (Dombivali Return)
Best Actor Female	Mrinal Kulkarni (Welcome Home)
Best Director	Nipun Dharmadhikari (Dhappa)
Best Film	Dhappa
Best Writing	Sumitra Bhave (Welcome Home)

IIFTC Tourism Impact Award 2020 goes to Zoya Akhtar for her Outstanding Contribution to World Film Tourism

- **8th India International Film Tourism Conclave (IIFTC)** honored the cult filmmaker - **Zoya Akhtar** with IIFTC Tourism Impact Award 2020 for her outstanding contribution to the world tourism through her cinema.
- The award was presented by His Worship, Mr. NaheedNenshi - Mayor of Calgary, Alberta (Canada) at a glittering award ceremony held recently in Mumbai.
- Zoya Akhtar set the trend in the film tourism space with her 2011 classic 'Zindagi Na MilegiDobara' shot in Spain, following it up with 2015 comedy-drama 'DilDhadakne Do' shot in Turkey.
- Another big winner at the event was, blockbuster Tamil Director, **K. S. Ravikumar**, who in his career spanning over 30 years has directed 43 films with starring mega stars including Sarathkumar, Kamal Hassan and Rajinikanth.
- Awards for Cinematic Excellence being presented to the makers of Professor Shanku O El Dorado (Bengali), and the Oscar Goes to (Malayalam), Amar (Kannada), Dev (Tamil), Mannadhudu 2 (Telugu), War (Hindi) and Badla (Hindi) for showcasing global locations as diverse as from Brazil to Portugal to Switzerland to Ukraine to Indian audiences.

Konark Sun Temple To Be Included In 'Iconic Sites' List

- The famous Black Pagoda, **the Sun temple in Konark** in Puri district of Odisha is to be included to the 'Iconic Sites' list of **19 monuments**, informed Union Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel.

- The **Statue of Unity in Gujarat and the Sun temple in Odisha** will be included to the list as the total number of monuments in the list is to be raised from 17 to 19.
- A total of 17 iconic tourist sites were identified by the government of India in 2019. It includes- **Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri (Uttar Pradesh), Ajanta and Ellora (Maharashtra), Humayun's Tomb, Red Fort and Qutub Minar (Delhi), Colva (Goa), Amer Fort (Rajasthan), Somnath and Dholavira (Gujarat), Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh), Hampi (Karnataka), Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu), Kaziranga (Assam), Kumarakom (Kerala) and Mahabodhi Temple (Bihar).**

President Kovind confers 61st annual Lalit Kala Akademi awards

- President Ram Nath Kovind conferred **61st annual Lalit Kala Akademi's awards on 15 artistes** at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- The awardees include **Anoop Kumar Manzukhi Gopi from Kerala, David Malakar from West Bengal, Hari Ram Kumbhawat from Rajasthan, Devendra Kumar Khare from Gujarat, Dinesh Pandya from Maharashtra, Mohan Kumar from Karnataka and Yashwant Singh from Delhi.**

Awards for reporting on road safety

- **Prachi Salve of IndiaSpend and Pradeep Dwivedi of Dainik Jagran** have been jointly awarded the **top prize** for their contribution towards reporting on **road safety by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS).**
- CMS, a not-for-profit research think tank, supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) India, conducted a three-month fellowship programme for journalists to work on road safety and related issues in 2019.
- The **second prize** awardees are **B Raveendra Shetty of Vijay Karnataka and Purnima Singh of Times Now Hindi.**
- The awardees in the third position are **Kishor Dwivedi of Press Trust of India and Sangamesh Menasinakai of The Times of India.**
- A total of 12 journalists were selected for the fellowship programme and they have produced in-depth stories on road safety for the print, TV and online medium

Nita Ambani features in 10 most influential women in sports

- **Nita Ambani, the owner of Mumbai Indians cricket team franchise,** has been named in the list of 10 most influential women in sports for 2020 alongside likes of tennis superstar **Serena Williams** and gymnast **Simone Biles.**
- Sports business network, iSportconnect releasing its '**Influential Women in Sport**' list for 2020 stated: "After beginning with an original shortlist of 25, it has now been whittled down to a top 10 following receiving opinions from our panel of experts.
- Ambani has led her Mumbai Indians franchise to becoming the most successful in IPL history and has been involved in many sports projects across different sports in the country, it stated.
- Others on the list included gymnast **Simone Biles** who was described as "one of the greatest athletes in the world and an ever-growing voice for women in sport", and footballer **Megan Rapinoe** "who is never afraid to speak her mind and talk about social issues".

- Tennis stars **Serena Williams** and **Naomi Osaka** also figure on the list that included **Ellie Norman**, Director of Marketing and Communications, Formula 1, **Cathy Engelbert**, Commissioner, WNBA, Fatma Samoura, Secretary-General, FIFA, Mary Davis, CEO, Special Olympics, and Clare Connor, Managing Director, Women's Cricket, ECB.
- Nita is the wife of the richest Indian Mukesh Ambani and has been on the board of Reliance Industries since June 2014. Her Mumbai Indians (MI) team has won the Indian Premier League (IPL) four times.
- iSportconnect stated the original shortlist included Indian tennis player Sania Mirza and Mithali Raj, captain of Indian women's cricket team.

Indira Gandhi and Amrit Kaur got place in '100 Influential Women of the Century' of the Times Magazine

- **Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi** and **freedom fighter Amrit Kaur** have been included in the list of 100 influential women of the last century by **Time magazine**. Time magazine released a list titled '**Spotlights Influential Woman Who Were Often Overshadowed**'.
- Time magazine has published Amrit Kaur and Indira Gandhi as Woman of the Year for the years 1947 and 1976 respectively in a special edition of the magazine.
- This includes women who have held positions from which men were often chosen, but these women have made an impact through their activism or culture.
- Also include Designers Coco Chanel, writer Virginia Woolf, Queen Elizabeth, actress Marlin Monroe, Princess Diana, Chinese Pharmaceutical Chemist Tu Youyou, Sadako Ogata and Michelle Obama.

15 outstanding women honoured with Nari Shakti Puraskar by Prez on International Women's Day

- President Ram Nath Kovind gave away the **Nari Shakti Puraskar** to **15 women** in Rashtrapati Bhawan on the occasion of International Women's Day.
- The awardees are 103 year old athlete **Mann Kaur**, Indian Air Force's first women fighter pilots **Mohana Singh**, **Bhawana Kanth** and **Avani Chaturvedi**, Farmers **Padala Bhudevi** and **Bina Devi**, Artisan **Arifa Jaan**, Environmentalist **Chami Murmu**, Entrepreneur **Nilza Wangmo**, Automotive research professional **Rashmi Urdhwardeshe**, Lady Mason **Kalavati Devi**, Twin Mountaineers, classical vocalist **Kaushiki Chakroborty** and 98 year old **Karthyayini Amma** who topped the literacy exam in 2018. Another awardee 105 year old **Bhageerathi Amma** could not travel to Delhi to receive the award.
- The National Award is given annually to individuals, groups, institutions in recognition of their exceptional work towards the cause of women empowerment, especially for vulnerable and marginalized women.

BusinessLine Changemaker Awards 2020

- Vice-President of India, **M Venkaiah Naidu** honoured the winners of BusinessLine Changemaker Awards 2020 at New Delhi.
- Changemaker (Social Transformation) – Shanti Raghavan
- Changemaker -(Digital Transformation)- Government e-Marketplace (GeM)
- Changemaker – (Financial Transformation)- India Stack
- Young Changemaker-Pradeep Mewada

- Young Changemakers- Rashid k; Vimal Govind; Arun George and Nikhil P
- Iconic Changemaker- Arunachalam Muruganandam
- Changemaker of the Year- Dutee Chand
- Changemaker of the year- ISRO

NITI Aayog organizes the Fourth Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards

- **Dr. Priyanka Mokshmar** is the co-founder of Vaayu Home Appliances. Vaayu provides economically affordable and environmentally feasible alternatives to traditional AC units across India - selling their products from Madhya Pradesh to Maharashtra and Delhi.
- **Ramya Venkataraman's** Centre for Teacher Accreditation (CENTA) has created a certification framework that allows for teachers' skills and competency to be assessed as well as improved.
- **Shilpi Kapoor** started BarrierBreak, a company focused on the accessibility of technology for those with disabilities. The company uses digital access as a way to bridge some of the challenges differently-abled people face daily.
- **Rinka Banerjee's** Thinking Forks is a consulting organisation, with expertise in the food and nutrition industry which has allowed them to create products to combat acute malnutrition; a program aligned with the Indian Government's public health efforts.
- **Nidhi Pant** combats the issue around waste and farmer living standards, through her Science for Society team,'s innovative idea of selling dehydrated vegetable snacks.
- **Anupriya Balikai's** Spookfish Innovations has created a standard for products and ensure quality control for food packaging. Via inspection machines that are retrofitted and integrated into existing manufacturing lines
- **Kalpna Sankar**, with a double doctorate in Nuclear Physics and Gender Issues, through her organization Hand in Hand is empowering the most marginalised and impoverished women in India through capacity building and training.
- **Khushboo Jain** created ImpactGuru which is a crowdfunding platform that empowers individuals,NGOs and social enterprises, by helping them raise funds for healthcare, social, and personal needs, from family, friends as well as strangers.
- **Sneha Sundaram's** company Kutuki focuses on bridging the learning gap that exists in Indian pre-schools through their mobile application, which has garnered over 50,000 users till date and attempts to use data to
- **Jayanti Pradhan** is an agro-processor and farmer from Odisha who has been educating women in her community and equipping them with the tools and knowledge of mushroom farming to enable them to become financially independent.
- **Jugnu Jain** is the founder and CSO, of Sapien Biosciences which is addressing this need for tissue-banks in India by successfully using medical waste to create medical innovations.
- **Pratyusha Pareddy** founded her startup, NemoCare, in 2017. Her company aims to combat infant mortality and promote neonatal care.

- **Poonam Bir Kasturi** started the Daily Dump which is building products and services for decentralised waste management in homes, community offices and public spaces.
- **Ruchi Jain** founded Taru Naturals which focuses on sustainable agriculture, striving to empower a network of small-scale farmers by leveraging upon India's ancient wisdom and sustainable agricultural practices
- **Sujata Sahu's** 17000 ft Foundation is a social enterprise focused on providing education and exposure to the communities in the most rural and isolated regions of Ladakh.
- **Dr Praveen Nair** is a Founder Trustee of Salaam Baalak Trust that has successfully worked in rehabilitating over 81,000 destitute and homeless children. Ms. Nair received the Special Jury Award.

Women scientists receive international exposure through Indo-U.S. Fellowship for WISTEMM

- The Indo-U.S. Fellowship for Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (WISTEMM) program of **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** in association with **Indo-U.S. Science & Technology Forum (IUSSTF)** have provided international exposure to several women scientists.
- WISTEMM aims to provide opportunities to Indian Women Scientists, Engineers & Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in premier institutions in the USA, to enhance their research capacities and capabilities.
- The programme is run for two categories of women scientists – **Women Overseas Student Internship (Module I)** for women students **pursuing PhD**, and **Women Overseas Fellowship (Module II)** for **women with PhD degree and holding regular position at any recognized institution/laboratory in India.**
- The **first batch** of women scientists comprising **20 women** has completed their visit to 20 leading institutions across the United States of America. Selected from among the application from the women scientific community, **second batch of 20 women** is undergoing visit across premier institutions of USA this year.
- The fellowship is for bright Indian women Citizen within the age bracket of 21 to 45 years. Such abroad age criteria not only cater to those who are currently pursuing research but also to those outstanding women researchers who would want to return after having taken a break onto their research path. The funding support extended under the program includes stipend, airfare, health insurance, contingency and conference allowances.
- **DST** has started several pioneering initiatives for promoting women in science. In the year 2014, DST restructured all women specific programmes under one umbrella called **Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN)**, which encompasses women-exclusive schemes and encourages them to foster their career by not only undertaking research in Science and Technology (S&T) but also focusing on S&T solutions of issues & challenges at the grassroots level for social benefits. **The mandate of KIRAN Program is to bring gender parity in S&T through gender mainstreaming.**

Important MOU's

India keen to partner with Japan in Mission Purvodaya

- **Union Minister for Steel and Petroleum & Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan**, met the Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik, along with the Ambassador of Japan to India, Satoshi Suzuki, in **Bhubaneswar**.
- With the abundance of raw materials, strategic geographical location and strong and developing connectivity, Odisha is well poised to be the heart of this eastern steel hub.
- In Odisha, **Kalinganagar** will be developed as the epicentre of **Mission Purvodaya**.
- **Mission Purvodaya** in steel sector envisions to create an integrated steel hub in Eastern India. More than 75% of India's envisioned incremental steel capacity will come from eastern India, with Odisha alone crossing 100 MTPA.
- The Ministry of Steel in association with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Government of Japan and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) is organizing a workshop on '**Enabling Procedures for Increase of Steel usage for the Growth of Economy**' in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**.

IIT-Kanpur, L&T Technology Services Sign MoU for Research in Cyber Security Programs

- **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur** or IITK and **L&T Technology Systems (LTTS)** have signed a multi-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) recently to **co-operate in areas of research in industrial and infrastructure cyber security**.
- IIT Kanpur has taken the lead in cyber security by setting up the Interdisciplinary Centre for Cyber Security and Cyber Defence of Critical Infrastructures (C3i).
- The inspiration behind establishing C3i at IIT Kanpur is to do research, education, training, and to explore and exploit the latest trends in cyber security to create technological safe guards and protect critical infrastructure.
- The MoU will also give LTTS access to IIT-Kanpur's cutting-edge test bed for critical infrastructure.

Flipkart partners with Aegon to sell quick-access life insurance policies

- **E-commerce marketplace Flipkart** and **Aegon Life Insurance** joined hands to sell comprehensive insurance solutions for customers looking for instant digital policies with a sum assured of **up to Rs 10 lakh**.
- **Life insurance** has the **second highest penetration** among all types of insurance available in the country. One of the major problems that the insurance industry faces is the notion that it is expensive and cumbersome to buy, followed by issues around long and rigid tenures and mis-selling.
- With this product, **Flipkart and Aegon Life** aim to solve for these issues and make life insurance available to customers at the click of a button in a convenient and transparent manner.
- The life insurance policies have varied offerings with sums assured ranging from **Rs 1 lakh to Rs 10 lakh** and premiums starting from Rs 129 for Rs 1 lakh sum insured. The policies will be available to the existing customers of Flipkart between the ages of **18 and 65 years**

CRPF inks MoU to re-skill specially-abled troops in cyberspace ops, AI

- The CRPF inked a deal with a disability support NGO in order to train its troops, who lost their limbs in operations, in various skills including cyber operations, artificial intelligence and para-sports.
- **A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** was formalised between **the force** and the **Aditya Mehta Foundation** in presence of **CRPF Director General (DG) A P Maheshwari**.

- The MoU is aimed to create new opportunities for such personnel who remain an integral part of the force.
- The DG also honoured five such specially-abled personnel of the force with DG's commendation disc and certificates for bringing laurels in the field of para-sports

HAL inks pact with Blue Ray Aviation for supply of two Dornier Do-228 multi-role aircraft

- **Blue Ray Aviation Pvt Limited** has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Transport Aircraft Division**, a division of **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited**, for deployment of two HAL made **Dornier Do-228 aircraft**.
- Transport Aircraft Division of HAL based in **Kanpur** produces Dornier Do-228, a 19-seater multi-role utility aircraft for various applications, including commuter, reconnaissance, surveillance and utility operations.
- Blue Ray Aviation is a DGCA approved **CAR 145** and **Flight Training Organisation** based in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat** and having operating bases at **Mahasena** and **Osmanabad**. They are basically into the General Aviation activities with focus on pilot training, maintenance of aircraft and connecting cities through charters.
- The company evinced interest in offering maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) for **HAL Do-228 aircraft**.

IIT Bombay, DST, Intel India announce third edition of startup accelerator programme Plugin

- The **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**, Government of India, **Intel India**, and **Society for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE)-IIT Bombay** have announced the third edition of **Plugin, a one-year collaborative accelerator programme for hardware and systems software startups**.
- **11 startups have been selected from over 200 entries from across India** in areas of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), security, and platform. These will receive mentoring and coaching, access to labs for tools and platforms, technical and financial support, local and international ecosystem connect and visibility.
- Plugin aims to address challenges faced by hardware and systems software startups with respect to **product design, development, commercialisation, and scaling their business**. The collaborative programme facilitates **infrastructure and technical support, prototyping, product development, and manufacturing connect** from Intel India Maker Lab and SINE-IIT Bombay.

Paytm, Hyderabad Metro tie up for QR-based tickets

- **Hyderabad Metro Rail Ltd** has launched **Paytm's QR-code-based metro ticketing system**.
- The new service will enable commuters to travel seamlessly and avoid queues to buy tokens at the metro stations. They can now simply purchase a QR ticket on their Paytm app, which can be displayed at the Automatic Fare Collection (AFC) gates to proceed for the journey.
- The company plans to extend the service to metro-feeder buses to ensure last-mile connectivity in the city.

MOU between DAY-NULM and AMAZON

- An MoU between **National Urban Livelihood Mission**, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs with **AMAZON for e marketing** of products made by Self Help Groups (SHGs) across the country in urban areas, in **New Delhi**.
- The Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, **Shri Durga Shanker Mishra** witnessing the signing ceremony.

Intel and CBSE join hands to digitally empower 1 lakh students with AI

- **Tech giant Intel and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to digitally empower nearly one lakh students with **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** integration in India's education system. Initiatives include the roll-out of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) curriculum framework for grades VIII, IX and X for 22,000 schools, with the aim to empower one lakh students within 2020.
- The curriculum is based on **"Intel AI For Youth"**, which is an immersive, hands-on learning programme using experiential methodologies covering both social and technological skills.
- The MoU also stated that Intel along with CBSE will soon be launching a **"National AI Olympiad"** to motivate young students to showcase their meaningful social impact solutions as evidence of achievement.
- The curriculum was piloted with eight schools, training youth to create AI projects focused on social impact in 2019, with the aim to empower 1,00,000 students with AI-readiness skills in 2020.

India, US sign Rs 1200 crore deal for missile protection suites for new VVIP planes

- **India** has signed a **Rs 1,200 crore** deal with the **United States** for buying **protection suites** to protect the **two new Boeing VVIP planes from missile attacks** that will be used to ferry the President and the Prime Minister.
- The missile protection suites on the two Boeing-777 extended range planes to be code named 'Air Force One' would provide it the capability to fend off any missile attacks.
- The self-protection suites for the Indian planes include infrared and electronic warfare countermeasures suites, countermeasure dispensing systems, and missile warning sensors.
- The two planes are expected to arrive in India by the middle of next year to begin the VVIP duties.
- During the visit by President Trump, India and the US had signed deals for the **24 MH60 Romeo** multirole helicopters for the Navy and six new Apache attack choppers for the Army.

IIT Mandi Signs Deal with NABARD for Setting up Three FPOs in Himachal

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi & Enabling Women of Kamand (EWOK) Society has inked a tripartite deal with the National Bank For Agriculture and Rural Development for setting up **three Farmer Producer Organization in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh**.
- NABARD has sanctioned an amount of **Rs 35 lakhs** to EWOK Society and IIT Mandi for 3 FPOs to be established in the next 3 years.
- EWOK, is an initiative of IIT Mandi Women's Center to aid rural women set up small enterprises in 5 panchayats of Kataula, Katindhi, Navlaya, Batheri and Kamand in Mandi by giving them proper guidance, training & information.
- According to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the three sides, IIT Mandi & EWOK Society will identify clusters to set up **Farmer Producer Organizations**, help **establish and register the FPOs**, **train the CEO & Board of Directors of FPOs**, besides making the business development plan & helping them in raising credit.

Memorandum of Understanding between Indian Air Force and Savitribai Phule Pune University

- As a unique initiative of **Indian Air Force**, the IAF and Savitribai Phule Pune University entered into an academic collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a **'Chair of Excellence'** at Department of **Defence & Strategic Studies** on 29 Feb 20.

- To pay tribute to the legend and commemorate the centenary birth year of the MIAF, the IAF has named it as "**Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Chair of Excellence**". The Chair will enable IAF officers to pursue Doctoral Research and higher studies in Defence & Strategic Studies and allied fields.

Tripura Govt and AAI sign MoU for construction of 6 equipment hiring centers

- Tripura State Government** and **Airport Authority of India** has signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of **six equipment hiring centers** in **Manu Block** under the Dhalai District of Tripura.
- Airport Authority official stated the project has been taken as part of its **Corporate Social Responsibility scheme**. He stated in the equipment hiring centers, equipment related to agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries will be kept. He further stated the types of equipment will be rented out to the needy farmers, Self Help Groups and to any other needy at a minimal cost.

ICAR inks pact with Patanjali for farm research, training

- ICAR** signed an agreement with **Hardiwar-based Patanjali Bio Research Institute (PBRI)** to undertake research work as well as training and education.
- As per the MoU, the specific plans will be developed to work on collaborative research programmes in areas of national interest related to sustainable agriculture development suitable to different agro-ecologies of the country.
- ICAR and PBRI will collaborate in mutually identified areas of training and education where the post graduate students of deemed universities and research institutes of ICAR may undertake internships in various areas of specialization with PBRI.
- ICAR stated it will assist PBRI in technology demonstration, capacity building, seed production for scaling up popular varieties developed by ICAR and transferring them among the farming community of the country.

Revision Points

Organizations	Purpose
India & Japan	Mission Purvodya
CRPF & Aditya Mehta Foundation	Re-skill specially-abled troops in cyberspace ops, AI
FlipKart & Aegon Life Insurance	Quick access of Life Insurance Policies
IIT Kanpur & L & T Technology Services	Research in Cyber security programs
HAL & Blue Ray Aviation	Supplying of two Dornier Do-228 aircraft
IIT Bombay, DST, Intel India	3 rd edition of start-up accelerator programme plugin
Hyderabad Metro Rail Ltd & Paytm	QR-code-based metro ticketing system
DAY-NULM & AMAZON	Emarketing of products
Intel & CBSE	Empowering of 1 Lakh students with AI
India & US	Missile Protection suites for new VVIP Planes
IIT Mandi & Enabling Women of Kamand	Set up of three Farmer Producer Organization

Air Force & Savitribai Phule Pune University	Chair of Excellence at Dept of Defence & Strategic Studies
Tripura Govt & AAI	Construction of six equipment hiring centres
ICAR & Patanjali	Farm Research & Training

Important Summit & Conference

19th World Productivity Congress to be held in Bangalore

- The **19th edition of World Productivity Congress (WPC)** will be held on May 6 to May 8, 2020 at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre, **Bangalore**.
- **Theme of 19th Productivity Congress 2020: "Industry 4.0 – Innovation and Productivity"**
- WPC brings together a distinguished group of leading businessmen, industrialists, scholars, politicians, administrators and productivity experts from around the globe and from all sectors of industry, commerce and public services.

Saudi king to chair G20 video summit on coronavirus

- **Saudi Arabia's King Salman** will chair an **emergency virtual summit of G20 leaders**, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, to advance the coordinated response to the novel corona virus pandemic that has claimed nearly 19,000 lives and upended life and businesses across the globe.
- **King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud** will chair the meeting to advance a coordinated global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its human and economic implications.
- Leaders from G20 nations will be joined by representatives from the coronavirus-affected countries like **Italy, Spain, Jordan, Singapore, and Switzerland**.
- Several top international organisations such as the **UN, the World Bank, the WHO, the World Trade Organisation, the IMF and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** will also participate in the summit.
- India is a member nation of the G20 group. The other members include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US.

Abilities in disabilities 'Divya Kala Shakti' event in Chennai

- It was an evening filled with **dance, music and some daredevil gymnastics**, as **children and youth with disabilities took the stage for 'Divya Kala Shakti'** in Chennai, a cultural programme focussed on **witnessing abilities in disabilities**.
- Organised by the **National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMED)**, in collaboration with the **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DIVYANGJAN)** and the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**, the cultural event brought together 98 children and youth with various disabilities, including visual and hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, autism spectrum disorder and other intellectual disabilities.

- This was the first regional edition of the event and the participants were from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry.

World Cities Summit

- The 7th **World Cities Summit** will be held from **5 to 9 July 2020**, in conjunction with the **9th Singapore International Water Week** and **5th Clean Enviro Summit Singapore**, at the Sands Expo & Convention Centre, Marina Bay Sands, in **Singapore**.
- The theme for WCS 2020 is “**Livable and Sustainable Cities: Adapting to a Disrupted World**”.
The biennial World Cities Summit (WCS) is an exclusive platform for government leaders and industry experts to address liveable and sustainable city challenges, share integrated urban solutions and forge new partnerships.
- Jointly organised by **Singapore’s Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC)** and the **Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)**, key highlights of the Summit include the WCS Mayors Forum, the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize and the WCS Young Leaders Symposium.

'Wings India 2020' aviation exhibition kicks off in Hyderabad

- The four-day civil aviation business exhibition and air show, **Wings India 2020** started in **Hyderabad**.
- The biennial event being organized by **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)** along with **Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airports Authority of India** will be on till March 15 at the **Begumpet airport**.
- The event will also host conferences between various company heads and a CEO’s forum.

WCD Minister inaugurates Seminar on the Future of Work: Women in India’s Workforce

- **Ministry of Women and Child Development** and the **World Bank** organized a discussion programme on the “**The Future of Work: Women in India’s Workforce**” in **New Delhi**.
- This discussion programme is part of series of events to observe International Women’s Day 2020 to celebrate the achievements of women in business, women enablers and public, private and civil society organizations.
- A diet plan for women and lactating mothers, for the first time, been formulated by Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and shared with all Anganwadi centres across the country.
- There are one lakh cases of domestic violence registered every year and in order to create a gender-neutral society it is essential not only to raise empowered girls but also raise boys who are sensitive to gender issues. For this, the WCD Ministry is working with NIMHANS to ensure counselling and improve the quality of counsellors in schools across all districts in the country.
- In India only 23 % of the labour force comprises of women and one in five girls are married before the age of 20, school dropout rates of girls are high and due to child care, domestic work and lack of female friendly environment in the workforce number of women in the labour force in India is low.

India Pharma & India Medical Device 2020 Conference to be held at Gandhinagar

- **The Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers**, in association with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry- **FICCI** is organising **India Pharma 2020 & India Medical Device 2020** Conference & Exhibition at Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat.

- Theme of the event is “**India Pharma: Meeting Challenges of Affordable and Quality Healthcare and India Medical Device: Promoting Affordable responsible and Quality Medical Device for Universal Health Care**”
- The objective of this event is to promote consumer centric manufacturing by involving Medical Electronics, Devices, Health Diagnostics, Hospitals and Surgical Equipments etc.
- The event also aims at deliberations and technology demonstration towards constituting an ecosystem for empowering our Electronics Technology development and manufacturing base.
- This year in the **fifth edition**, the event is being organised for the first time in the State of Gujarat, which is also the partner state for this event.
- The **Indian pharmaceutical market** is the **third largest** in terms of **volume** and **thirteenth largest** in terms of **value**. **India** is the **largest supplier** of **generic medicines globally**. Similarly The Medical Devices industry in India is valued at **USD 5.2 billion**, contributes about 4-5 percent to the USD 96.7 billion Indian healthcare Industry.
- During the event an **Exhibition** was held on **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices**.

Fourth Global Ayurveda Festival to be held at Kochi from May 16

- The **Fourth Global Ayurveda Festival**, GAF will be held at **Kochi in Kerala** from **16th to 20th May**.
- The theme for the five-day event is **Ayurveda Medical Tourism: Actualizing India’s credibility**.
- It will be the largest Ayurvedic event ever to be held anywhere across the world and will witness the largest gathering of experts, stakeholders and business explorers from the field of Ayurveda.
- Ayurveda Tourist Centres and Spas giving rejuvenation therapy and their potential curative aspects will be showcased. GAF-2020 will bring together the world of Ayurveda wellness providers and it’s seekers to one platform.

International Conference on Nano Science and Technology held in Kolkata

- **ICONSAT (International Conference on Nano Science and Technology)** is the series of biennial international conference held in India under the aegis of Nano Mission, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India that provides a global platform of interactions among eminent scientists to bring to fore the recent advances in the area of nanoscience and technology.
- The Nano Mission, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, has approved the organization of ICONSAT–2020 by **the S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Kolkata** for the year 2020.
- It also aims to provide a potential platform for the young researchers and students from within the country and abroad to keep pace with the latest development in the emerging areas of Nano Science and Technology.

The following broad areas will be covered in the conference

- Emerging materials for nanoscience and nanotechnology
- Quantum Materials
- Energy materials
- Nanoelectronics and Nanophotonics

- Synthesis, Properties and Application of Nanomaterials
- Thermoelectric
- Nanomagnetism
- Plasmonics
- Theory and simulation of nanomaterials
- Nanotechnology for agriculture, biomaterials, tissue engineering, stem cell technology, etc.

Indian Army's International Seminar Pragyan Conclave 2020

- **PRAGYAN CONCLAVE 2020**, a two-day Indian Army International Seminar being organised by Centre for Land Warfare Studies, commenced at **New Delhi**.
- The event brings together cross-domain national and international experts to deliberate on the complex subject of **'Changing Characteristics of Land Warfare and its Impact on the Military'**.
- The seminar provided a platform for deliberations on emerging ideas, perspectives and narratives that define the **'New Age Warfare'**.

Pune to host 108th Indian Science Congress in 2021

- **Pune** will host the **108th Indian Science Congress in January 2021**, the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) has announced. This will be the fourth time that the city will host the prestigious meet in the last 100 years.
- The event, set to be held at **Symbiosis International University's Lavale campus**, will be themed on **'Science and Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment'** and focus on economic growth, environmental protection and social inclusion of all communities using science and technology.
- It will also see deliberations on providing equal opportunities to women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), while achieving sustainable development.
- **Dr Vijay Laxmi Saxena** has been elected **general president** of the **Indian Science Congress, 2021**.
- **107th Indian Science Congress**, 2020 held in **Bengaluru**.

35th edition of AAHAR, Food and Hospitality fair, begins in New Delhi

- The **35th edition of AAHAR - the Food and Hospitality fair** began in **New Delhi**.
- This five-day-long fair is being organized by **India Trade Promotion Organisation, ITPO**, with support of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Agriculture and Processed Food Products Development Authority and several apex industry associations.
- The fair will feature a wide range of food products, machinery, hospitality, Food and Beverage Equipment and Decoration items, and Confectionery items from over 750 participants from India and overseas.
- In the foreign category, the fair will witness participation from countries, including **Hong Kong, Israel, Indonesia, Japan, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, UK and UAE**.

Mrs Smriti Zubin Irani inaugurates a National Conference on Women in Police and CAPFs in New Delhi

- **National Conference on Women in Police and CAPFs** organized by the Bureau of Police Research and Development in **New Delhi**.

- The main objective of the National Conference was to discuss and deliberate on the following 2 (two) themes
- Cyber Stalking and Bullying of Women : Steps for Protection
- Challenges faced by CAPF Women in Operational Areas
- To commemorate this event, the Hon'ble Minister released a hand-out – “BPR&D Mirror – Gender Bender”.
- Union Minister for Women and Child Development Mrs Smriti Zubin Irani has stressed the need to train more female forensic investigators and cyber crime experts.
- Mrs Irani advised that counselling at the time of recruitment of women in the forces would make them better prepared for their career. The Union Minister regretted that the society still looks at the working women with bias and holds the performance of men to be the only benchmark for success.

Revision Points

Conference/Summits	Venue	Theme
19th edition of World Productivity Congress	Bangalore	Industry 4.0 – Innovation and Productivity
Virtual G20 Leaders Summit	Saudi Arabia	-
7 th World Cities Summit	Singapore	Livable and Sustainable Cities: Adapting to a Disrupted World
Wings India 2020	Hyderabad	-
Future of Work: Women in India's Workforce	New Delhi	-
India Pharma 2020 & India Medical Device 2020	Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat	India Pharma: Meeting Challenges of Affordable and Quality Healthcare and India Medical Device: Promoting Affordable responsible and Quality Medical Device for Universal Health Care
Fourth Global Ayurveda Festival	Kochi, Kerala	Ayurveda Medical Tourism: Actualizing India's credibility
ICONSAT (International Conference on Nano Science and Technology)	Kolkata	-
PRAGYAN CONCLAVE 2020	New Delhi	-
108th Indian Science Congress	Pune	Science and Technology for Sustainable development with Women Empowerment
35th edition of AAHAR - the Food and Hospitality fair	New Delhi	-
National Conference on Women in Police and CAPFs	New Delhi	-

Important Defence News

Exercise	Conducted by	Conducted at
National Maritime Search and Rescue Workshop and Exercise-2020 (SAREX-20)	India Coast Guard	Goa (Theme: Harmonisation of Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue code named 'HAMSAR')

HAL Mulls Setting Up Logistics Bases In Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia And Sri Lanka To Boost Defence Exports

- **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** is planning to set up **logistics bases** in four nations outside of India.
- The four nations where HAL plans to set up bases are **Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Sri Lanka**.
- The development is likely to help nations to purchase Indian state-of-the-art light combat aircraft Tejas and other military helicopters.
- The logistics bases which HAL is planning to set up in these nations will deliver maintenance services for aircraft from Russia, whose serviceability record is very poor, which is an issue also faced by India.
- The development is in sync with the goal of achieving \$5 billion defence sector exports in the next five years, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

DRDO Develops Body Suit To Protect Doctors From COVID-19

- A **body suit** developed by India's premier research and development organisation **DRDO** can protect **doctors and other health workers** attending on Covid-19 patients.
- The body suit developed earlier for medical and paramedical staff to manage and evacuate the casualties in the event of radiological emergencies has now been converted into a full body suit to stop contamination.
- The suit is washable and has passed the ASTM International standards. The suit is widely tested by DRDO and other agencies and found suitable for the cause.
- Each suit costs Rs 7,000. Frontier Protective Wear Pvt Ltd, Kolkata and Medikit Pvt Ltd, Mumbai are producing 10,000 suits per day.
- The body suit is one of the four instruments developed by the DRDO and ready to be deployed in **'War against Corona'**.

In a first, India, France conduct joint patrols from Reunion Island

- **India and France**, For the first time, have conducted **joint patrols from the Reunion Island**, signalling New Delhi's intent to engage with **friendly foreign partners** in expanding its footprint in the Indian Ocean, focusing on the stretch between the East African coastline and the Malacca straits.
- India has so far carried out **Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT)** only with maritime neighbours and had rejected a similar offer by the US.

- The Indian Navy conducted a joint patrol with the French Navy last month from the Reunion Island. The patrol was conducted by a **P-8I aircraft** with French Navy personnel onboard
- Currently, under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and broader maritime cooperation, the Indian Navy undertakes **joint EEZ surveillance with Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius** and **CORPATs with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia**.
- The joint patrols, along with other activities, are part of the Navy's increasing engagement in the Indian Ocean Region through capacity-building and joint activities for improving **MDA and interoperability**.

Indian Army launches 'Operation Namaste' to help govt fight COVID-19

- **Army Chief General MM Naravane** launched 'Operation Namaste' to combat the spread of **COVID-19**.
- His troops, deployed on the Line of Control or Line of Actual Control, to not worry about their near and dear ones and cancellation of leaves as a similar situation had been observed during Operation Parakram and the force had come out successfully from it and will execute Operation Namaste too successfully.

US, UAE troops launch major exercise Native Fury

- **US Marines** and **UAE forces** conducted the biennial exercise, named **Native Fury** at **Abu Dhabi**.
- The exercise saw forces seize a sprawling model Mideast city, a drill conducted amid tensions with Iran and despite the new corona virus pandemic.
- It also comes after the U.S. killed Iran's most prominent general in a drone strike in January, and Tehran retaliated with a ballistic missile attack on American forces in Iraq.

Bridge constructed by Border Roads Organisation over Teesta River in North Sikkim opened for traffic

- In a relief to the residents of **Lachen** in **North Sikkim**, the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** opened for traffic 360 feet long bailey suspension bridge over **Teesta River** in **Munshithang** near **Chungthang town**. The 86 Road Construction Company (RCC) of 758 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF), under Project Swastik, commenced the construction of the bridge in October 2019 and completed it in January 2020.
- The approach roads to the bridge have also been constructed. The bridge will give impetus to tourism and facilitate the movement of logistics for the Armed Forces deployed in forward areas.
- In June 2019, a steel bridge of 180 feet span at the same location was completely damaged due to a massive cloud burst resulting in severing the lines of communication in North District of Sikkim. The connectivity was kept open by routing the traffic through restricted Army land.

Navy to buy 24 MH-60R multi-role helicopters from US

- India signed a **\$3-billion defence** deal related to the acquisition of Seahawk multi-role helicopters for the Indian Navy and Apache attack helicopters for the Army, the Indian Navy has announced that **24 MH-60R multi-role helicopters (MRH)** will be procured under the Buy (Global) category through Foreign Military Sales. A contract for the MRH was signed on February 25.
- India and the US have concluded defence deals for **24 MH-60R MRH** and **six AH-64E Apache helicopters**.

Defence Ministry signs contract with Israeli firm IWI to acquire 16,479 light machine guns

- The **Defence Ministry** has signed a **capital acquisition contract** with **Israel Weapons Industries, IWI** for procurement of 16,479 light machine guns, LMGs at a cost of **880 crore rupees**. IWI, which is based out of Ramat HaSharon city in Israel, would be providing **Negev 7.62*51 mm LMGs** to the Indian armed forces under the contract.
- The contracted Negev 7.62X51 mm LMG is a combat proven weapon and currently used by several countries around the globe. Defence Ministry stated, the LMG will greatly enhance the lethality and range of a soldier vis-a-vis the presently used weapon.

Indian Navy sets up Quarantine Facility at Visakhapatnam

- In an effort to augment Nation's fight against the spread of CoViD-19, Indian Navy has set up a Quarantine Camp at **INS Vishwakarma** in **Eastern Naval Command (ENC)** for Indian nationals being evacuated from CoViD 19 affected countries.
- The Quarantine Camp is fully equipped to accommodate nearly 200 personnel with all suitable facilities and other arrangements.
- The evacuated personnel in the camp will be closely monitored to ensure Social Distancing and under medical supervision in accordance with the protocols laid down by the Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India by a team of naval personnel and medical professionals of ENC.
- As a precautionary measure, the evacuated persons would be kept under quarantine for a period of fourteen days.

DAC approves procurement of 83 indigenous Tejas fighter aircraft for Indian Air Force

- **Defence Acquisition Council** approved procurement of **83 indigenous Tejas** fighter aircraft for Indian Air Force. The Light Combat Aircraft Tejas is going to be the backbone of Indian Air Force in future.
- While orders of 40 Tejas aircraft had been placed with HAL in initial configurations, DAC paved the way for the procurement of another 83 of the more advanced version of the aircraft from HAL.
- This procurement will be a major boost to **Make in India** as the aircraft is indigenously designed. The **Defence Acquisition Council** also accorded approval for acquisition of indigenous Defence equipment for about **1,300 crore rupees**.

Juniper Cobra Missile Defense drill cancelled over coronavirus

- The 10th biannual **Juniper Cobra exercise** between the **IDF** and **United States European Command (EUCOM)** was suspended, as fears over coronavirus continue to rattle Israel and the world.
- The 10-day-long drill was scheduled to see more than 2,500 US troops participate in several different locations in **Israel, Europe and the US**.
- The cancellation of the drill came days after **another joint exercise was shut down** over concerns of the **novel coronavirus**.
- The "**Eagle Genesis**" exercise between **the IDF's Ground Forces** and **EUCOM troops** to train against regional threats was canceled, and more than 60 US personnel who had traveled to Israel returned to their bases on Friday at the request of the Israeli government.

Tamil Nadu, UP to set up Defence industrial corridors

- The **Minister of State for Defence, Shripad Naik** has been decided to set up two Defence industrial corridors in the country, one in **Uttar Pradesh** and another in **Tamil Nadu**.
- Subsequently, five nodes for Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor – **Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Salem** and **Tiruchirapalli** have been identified.
- Investments of approximately **Rs 3,100 crore** were announced by **Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)**, Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSUs) and private industries in Tamil Nadu corridor.
- Till date, six consultation meetings of stakeholders in Tamil Nadu were organized across its various nodes. Further, the Government has also appointed a consultant for the preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for these two Defence corridors.
- Setting up of Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor would catalyse indigenous production of Defence and aerospace-related products, thereby reducing our reliance on imports and promoting export of these items to other countries.

Important Science and Technology

IIT Bombay makes glass substrates for 5G devices, consumer electronics

- Researchers in **IIT Bombay** have achieved a breakthrough in making **glass substrates** that have significant advantages over the conventional silicon substrates in applications such as **5G devices**.
- Substrates are the base on which a thin film of a material (like Silicon oxide) is coated on which circuits are etched. Typically, substrates have been made of Silicon, for many advantages — it doesn't expand much on heating, making it easy to coat stuff on it. However, the micro electromechanical systems (MEMS) industry has been toying with other material for substrates — and glass has been high up on the list.
- **Glass substrates** (technically, fused silica, which is a pure form of glass without any metallic impurities) are much cheaper — one estimate has it that it is 80 per cent cheaper than Silicon substrates.

IIT Guwahati students develop drone to sanitise large areas

- A group of students at the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati**, has developed a drone with an automated sprayer to sanitise large areas including roads, parks and footpaths, to prevent the spread of coronavirus.
- The student group, which has a start-up called "**Racerfly**", has approached the Assam and Uttarakhand governments offering to join the fight against the coronavirus pandemic with their sprayer system which they claim can accomplish the task in less than 15 minutes which would otherwise take a person 1.5 days of work.
- The drone will help in sanitizing large areas by just one person spraying and monitoring using a mobile app, hence eliminating the need for more cleaners who use manual spraying disinfectant.
- This will help in following social distancing guidelines issued by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** to fight COVID-19. The drone which is crash proof, is equipped to adjust itself to terrain height and avoid obstacles.

ULA's Atlas 5 launches AEHF-6 communications satellite in its first mission for U.S. Space Force

- A **United Launch Alliance Atlas 5 rocket** lifted off from Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, carrying a \$1.4 billion **Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF-6) communications satellite** for the U.S. Space Force.
- This was the **sixth and final satellite of the AEHF** constellation that provides secure, jam-proof voice and data communications for U.S. national leadership, military forces and **international partners Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Australia.**
- All six were manufactured by Lockheed Martin.
- This was ULA's 138th launch, the 83rd of the Atlas 5 rocket since 2002 and the 11th in the 551 configuration. The mission also marked the 500th flight of the Aerojet Rocketdyne RL10 engine that powers the Centaur upper stage. Aerojet also provided the five AJ-60A solid rocket boosters.

Facebook launches messenger chatbot to share authentic information on Covid-19

- Social media firm **Facebook** stated it has launched a **Messenger Chatbot** to help people access authentic information about Covid-19 as well as bust myths and fake news around it. Messenger is Facebook's direct messaging platform.
- Together with the **Ministry of Health** and **MyGov**, Facebook has facilitated Corona **Helpdesk Chatbot** on the Messenger platform.
- Facebook users can start accessing corona **Helpdesk Chatbot** and reach out to the Ministry of Health for authentic news, official updates, precautionary measures and emergency helpline numbers through this chatbot.
- Depending on the question, users will receive verified information in the form of a video, infographic or text. This combined effort by The Ministry of Health, MyGov and Facebook will help contribute to the safety and well-being while providing information from reliable and credible sources.

IIT Gandhinagar launches Project 'Isaac' to engage students in creative projects during Corona lockdown

- **Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGN)** has launched **Project Isaac** to engage its students in creative projects to enhance their **critical skills** while they are confined to their homes because of Corona virus.
- The project is inspired by **Sir Isaac Newton**, who was similarly sent home by Trinity College, Cambridge, because of the Great Plague of London in 1665. During this year, Newton, then a 22-year-old college student developed some of his most profound discoveries, including early calculus, as well as his theories of optics and gravity.
- As part of the project, four different competitions are being organized by **IIT, Gandhinagar** to cultivate new skills among students regarding writing, painting, coding, music, creative expression, and so on. Students can take part in competitions online. Nearly 40 per cent of IITGN students are already participating in various activities, which are entirely voluntary.
- **Project Isaac** is a model for academic institutions worldwide to explore ways to engage students in the midst of the pandemic.

IIT Delhi makes anti-infection fabric to curb hospital infections

- The **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)** has developed an "**infection-proof fabric**" to be used at hospitals to prevent **hospital-acquired infections (HAIs)**. The development by "**Fabiosys Innovations**", a start-up incubated at IIT-Delhi, comes at a time when the world is dealing with the deadly coronavirus outbreak.
- However, the team has been working on the project for over a year with support from the government's Department of Science and Technology.
- According to official statistics from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, for every 100 hospitalised patients in developing countries, 10 acquire HAIs and the risk is even higher at the time of a coronavirus outbreak.
- The team claims to have developed an affordable, novel textile-processing technology, which converts regular cotton fabric into infection-proof fabric.

North Korea test fires 2 ballistic missiles into Sea of Japan

- **North Korea** fired **two projectiles** that appeared to be **short-range ballistic missiles** into the sea off the east coast of the Korean peninsula.
- The suspected missiles were fired from **North Pyongan province**. The province is above Pyongyang on the north-west corner of the Korean peninsula bordering China.
- Earlier this month, North Korea test-fired a new type of missile which is thought could also be launched from a submarine.
- The projectiles landed outside Japan's maritime exclusive economic zone.
- The South Korean military would maintain its readiness to track and monitor further launches.

Researchers in United States discover communication network in plants

- **Researchers in the United States** have **discovered a communication network in plants** that helps them respond to a hormone involved in pest resistance. This may help develop crops that can withstand insect attacks.
- The study, published in the journal 'Nature Plants', observed that the hormone called jasmonic acid is particularly important for a plant's defense response against fungi and insects.
- In the study, the scientists used the plant **Arabidopsis thaliana**, a widely studied small flowering plant in the mustard family, whose genome has been well characterised.

Fins of prehistoric fish reveal origins of the human hand

- The researchers examined a remarkably complete fossil of a fish called **Elpistostegewatsoni** that represents a pivotal stage in a landmark event in the history of life on Earth - the transition of fish to land vertebrates.
- For this to occur, anatomical changes were needed including the evolution of hands and feet. Inside the tip of Elpistostege's front fins - called **pectoral fins** - were tiny bones **called radial bones** arranged in a series of rows like digits - the precursor to fingers. These would have provided the flexibility for Elpistostege's fin to bear weight on land.
- By looking at Elpistostege, it is important to realize that we, as human beings, are coming from a long line of evolution, that every part of our body, like our fingers, has a long evolutionary history, stated paleontologist Richard Cloutier of Université du Québec à Rimouski in Canada, lead author of the research published in the journal Nature.
- This is true for Homo sapiens but it is also true for all living organisms, Cloutier added.

Scientists discover prehistoric wonder chicken

- The **oldest fossil of a modern bird** yet found, dating from the **age of dinosaurs**, has been identified by an **international team of palaeontologists**.
- The spectacular fossil, affectionately nicknamed the **'Wonderchicken'**, includes a nearly complete skull, hidden inside nondescript pieces of rock, and dates from less than one million years before the asteroid impact which eliminated all large dinosaurs.
- Detailed analysis of the skull shows that it combines many features common to modern chicken- and duck-like birds, suggesting that the 'Wonderchicken' is close to the last common ancestor of modern chickens and ducks. The fossil was found in a limestone quarry near the **Belgian-Dutch border**, making it the first modern bird from the age of dinosaurs found in the northern hemisphere.

WhatsApp launches COVID-19 information hub with WHO; grants \$1m to IFCN for fact-checking

- **WhatsApp** announced the launch of two initiatives in support of the global fight against the Coronavirus pandemic. The first initiative is the global launch of the **"WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub"** in partnership with the **World Health Organization, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Development Program**.
- While the second initiative is the enhancement of fact-checking network to counter fake news and rumours around coronavirus. WhatsApp donated \$1m to the Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), as per the company's official release.
- The **WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub** was launched on [whatsapp.com/coronavirus](https://www.whatsapp.com/coronavirus) to provide guidance for health workers, educators, community leaders, nonprofits, local governments and local businesses that rely on WhatsApp to communicate. The site also offers general tips and resources for users around the world to reduce the spread of rumours and connect with accurate health information.
- WhatsApp is also working with the UNDP, WHO, and UNICEF to provide messaging hotlines for people around the world to use directly. These hotlines will provide reliable information and will be listed on the WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub

App developed to track Covid-19 cases district-wise

- The students of **Mahindra Ecole Centrale College of Engineering**, promoted by **Tech Mahindra**, have developed a **district-wise tracking app** to help locate **COVID-19** cases in the country. This will help people avoid the virus-prone areas or take precautionary measures.
- Besides, it will also help policy makers and authorities to pool in resources to address the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.
- The tracker, available at <https://covindia.netlify.com>, collates information and links it with their geographical location.
- The data for the tracker is obtained from credible and reliable sources such as the Ministry of Health and other reputed news organisations. A team of students will track and pull out data and feed it to the app, an executive of Mahindra Ecole Centrale College of Engineering stated.

- Tech Mahindra set up this college in Hyderabad in 2014 in association with the French institute Ecole Centrale Paris

IHBT scientists develop new hand-sanitizer

- The demand for products such as sanitizer is increasing amidst reports of preventive measures against coronavirus and many counterfeit materials being sold in the market. In view of this, a new hand-sanitizer has been developed by the scientists of **CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT)** based in **Palampur, Himachal Pradesh**.
- Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Director of IHBT stated that The natural flavours, active tea constituents and alcohol content in this hand-sanitizer have been used as per the guidelines of the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. One of the special things is that chemicals like parabens, triclosan, synthetic fragrance and phthalates have not been used in this product.
- The technology has been transferred to Palampur based company M/s A.B. Scientific Solutions for the commercial production of this newly developed hand-sanitizer. An agreement has been signed between CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT) and the company.

Microsoft launches interactive map to provide COVID-19 global updates

- **Microsoft** has launched a new interactive map on its search engine **Bing** to help users track the status of the **COVID-19** pandemic in various regions.
- The map provides information regarding the number of '**currently active**,' '**recovered**' and '**fatal**' coronavirus cases in countries across the globe. It also gives a detailed breakdown of cases in each state for the US.
- The tech giant is pooling its data from various resources, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and Wikipedia, the Verge reported.
- **Microsoft** is not the only tech giant working on COVID-19 tech tools.
- **Google** is also working on a website which will provide information about the outbreak, preventive measures and links to local resources.
- The search giant's parent company, **Alphabet**, is also working in partnership with the US government to help manage coronavirus diagnosis and treatment

ARCI develops cost-effective solar technology for industrial process heat

- Scientists from the **International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI)**, **Hyderabad**, an autonomous institution under the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**, have developed a cost-effective solar receiver tube technology for industrial process heat applications.
- The receiver tube technology developed by the ARCI team efficiently absorbs solar radiation and converts it into heat for the targeted applications, especially in industries. It exhibits high corrosion resistance suitable for Indian weather conditions.

- The solar receiver tube is one of the key components in the CST technology. Currently, Indian CST plant developers are importing the high-end evacuated CSP receivers for CST applications. This has become a choking point for the commercialization of CST technology.
- The receiver tube achieved around 93 % absorptance (effectiveness in absorbing radiant energy, It is the ratio of the absorbed to the incident radiant power) and around 14 % emittance (amount of light, emitted by an area of the surface of a radiating body) along with good thermal stability and high corrosion resistance.
- The absorber coating has been successfully validated for heat gain and heat loss studies in a testing facility established at ARCI.
- Two patent applications have been filed for this technology, and an MoU has been signed with M/s. **Greenera Energy India Private Limited** for technology transfer, which plans to mass-produce the solar receiver tube for wider market absorption.

CSIR-National Physical Laboratory develops Ink to Curb Fake Printing of Passports and Counterfeiting of Currency Notes

- **CSIR-National Physical Laboratory** has developed a **bi-luminescent security ink** which glows in red and green colours when illuminated by two different excitation sources at 254 nano meters (nm) and 365 nm, respectively.
- The ink was prepared in a batch of 1kg and given to **Bank Note Press (BNP)**, Dewas, a unit of **Security Printing Minting Corporation of India Ltd. (SPMCIL)**, New Delhi. The ink is found comparable to the standards that are in use.
- The formulation can be used to check the authenticity of passports, Government documents, tamper-evident labels, identity cards, etc.

Scientists discover biggest explosion in universe since Big Bang

- Astronomers have discovered the biggest explosion in the universe since the Big Bang, in a galaxy far away.
- An explosion five times bigger than any explosion known so far has been discovered in the **Ophiuchus galaxy** cluster **390 million light-years** from Earth. The scientists responsible for the discovery have published their findings in The Astrophysical Journal.
- The scientists first discovered a huge dent in the Ophiuchus cluster back in 2016 through X-Ray data. The possibility of the giant cavity in the cluster's plasma, which is the layer of super-hot gas surrounding the galaxy's black hole was dismissed as "unlikely" back in 2016.
- The discovery was made using **X-Ray data** gathered from **NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory** and ESA's XMM-Newton. The radio telescopes used to collect radio data were from the Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) in Australia and the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) in India.

Indian Scientists develop Fuel Cell Technology for Disaster Management

- Scientists at **International Advanced Research for Powder Metallurgy & New Materials (ARCI)**, Hyderabad, an autonomous R&D Centre of Department of Science and Technology (DST) have developed **Polymer Electrolyte Membrane fuel cells (PEMFC)**.
- PEMFC, in its entirety, have an advantage of operational capability at low-temperatures with applications in decentralised power generation systems. Through intense R&D efforts in the area of fuel cell technologies, ARCI at

its Centre for Fuel Cell Technology, Chennai has developed in-house PEMFC systems in the power range of 1 to 20 kiloWatt (kW) and demonstrated the same in stationary (1-20 kW) and transport applications (1,3,5 kW).

- Emergency Operation Centres (EOC) backed with 10 kW system along with fuel cell stack (providing sustainable electricity using hydrogen gas without the need of grid power), air moving sub systems, power control devices and control and monitoring system is being planned as a natural disaster management measure.
- ARCI is now planning to set up a PEMFC system up to 10 kW capacity at Tamil Nadu State Emergency Operation Centre (TN SEOC) to operate the systems like early warning systems, VHF set, IP phone, BSNL Ethernet and office equipment like scanner, computers, printers, phone, FAX and normal requirements like lighting and fan.

Ranchi University to launch its own Community Radio Station

- **Ranchi University** will launch its own Community Radio Station -- **Aap Sabka Radio** on International Women's Day.
- Vice-chancellor of the University, **Dr Ramesh Kumar Pandey** has dedicated this Radio Station to all Women who have always remained the driving force behind every man.
- Radio Khanchi under Ranchi University remains to be the first-ever University in the Eastern Zone to be gifted with a Community Radio Station by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and sponsored by Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Jharkhand.
- The radio would provide help to university students which is spread over a campus of more than 15 kms.

IIT Madras team develops AI-powered drone to counter rogue drones

- Researchers at **IIT Madras** have developed an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered drone that can counter '**Rogue Drones.**'
- This system can help law enforcement agencies, security services and armed forces secure airspace over critical civilian and military installations from surveillance by rogue drones.
- The drone can track down rogue drones visually and hack into their **GPS navigation system**, following which the target drone is forced to change its flight path or land safely.
- A major advantage of this system is that it can be **controlled over the Internet** and can navigate autonomously as compared to most existing drones that operate on 'line of sight' meaning that the operators need to keep the drone within their sight.
- The new system was designed by a team comprising **Vasu Gupta**, a final year B Tech student, Department of Aerospace Engineering, and **Rishabh Vashistha**, a Project Associate working in RAFT Lab, Department of Aerospace Engineering. The team was mentored by **Dr Ranjith Mohan**, Assistant Professor, Department of Aerospace Engineering.

Doctors use gene editing tool Crispr inside body for first time

- Scientists have used the gene editing tool **Crispr-Cas9** inside a person's body for the first time, a new development in efforts to operate on DNA to treat diseases.

- **CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats)** is a tool for locating and cutting DNA at a specific spot.
- One of the biggest potential risks from gene editing is that CRISPR could make unintended changes in other genes, but the companies have done a lot to minimize that and to ensure that the treatment cuts only where it's intended to.

Helpline number for women being launched

- An helpline number has been launched for women students, researchers, entrepreneurs and scientists on international women's day on March 8. **The Helpline No. 011-2656 5285** would clear doubts cleared related to programs of Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST). Now, this Helpline will provide handholding to women scientists in **STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)** and will be available during office hours (09:30 am to 05:30 pm) during working days.
- On National Science Day, President Ram Nath Kovind announced three key initiatives for gender advancement and equality in academic and research. The theme of this year's **National Science Day** was '**Women in Science**'.
- These three initiatives are **Vigyan Jyoti**, **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI)** and an online portal for science and technology resources for women. Vigyan Jyoti is an initiative that will create a level-playing field for meritorious girls in high school to pursue STEM subjects in their higher education.
- The second initiative, GATI, will develop a comprehensive charter and a framework for assessing gender inequality in STEM.
- The online portal will provide e-resources related to all women-specific government schemes, scholarships, fellowships, career counselling with details of subject area experts from various disciplines in science and technology. (India Science Wire)

New explosive detection device, developed by DRDO & IISc Bangalore, unveiled in Pune

- **RaIDer-X**, a new explosive detection device, was unveiled at the National Workshop on Explosive Detection (NWED-2020) in **Pune**. RaIDer-X has the capability to detect explosives from a stand-off distance. The data library can be built in the system to expand its capability to detect a number of explosives in pure form as well as with the contaminants.
- Bulk explosive in concealed condition can also be detected by the device. RaIDer-X has been co-developed by **High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) Pune** and **Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore**.
- The NWED-2020 was inaugurated by Secretary, Department of Defence Research & Development and Chairman Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) Dr G Satheesh Reddy. The two-day workshop has been organised by HEMRL Pune on its diamond jubilee celebration. **HEMRL Pune** is a premier laboratory of DRDO. It provides a platform to scientists, technocrats and users to share knowledge, experience and updated information on the technological advancements made in the recent past.
- The workshop will help in the further development of **explosive detection devices** and keep abreast on the recent development and advancements in the field of **explosive detection**.

India to have its first sky eye in geostationary orbit GISAT-1

- India will launch its first state of the art earth observation satellite **Geo Imaging Satellite (GISAT-1)** to be placed in geostationary orbit on March 5, stated the Indian Space Agency.
- The satellite will provide real-time image of large area of region of interest at frequent intervals. The GISAT-1 will also enable quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic events and any short term events.
- According to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the GISAT-1 will also provide spectral signatures for agriculture, forestry, mineralogy, disaster warning, cloud properties, snow, glaciers and oceanography.
- The satellite will have payload imaging sensors of six band multi-spectral visible and near infra-red with 42 metres resolution; 158 bands hyper-spectral visible and near infra-red with 318 metres resolution and 256 bands hyper-spectral short wave infra-red with 191 metres resolution. Weighing 2,268 kg, the GISAT-1 will be carried by the three-stage geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle (**GSLV-F10**).
- The rocket is expected to lift off at 5.43 p.m. on March 5 from the second launch pad at India's rocket port at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.
- About 18 minutes into the flight the GSLV rocket will first place GISAT-1 in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO). From GTO, the satellite will be taken up further firing its onboard motors to geostationary orbit.
- A satellite in geostationary orbit (about 36,000 km above earth) has an orbital period equal to earth's rotational period. A four-metre diameter Ogive shaped payload fairing (heat shield) is being flown for the first time in this GSLV flight. This is the fourteenth flight of the GSLV

Important Ranking and Indexes

Index	India's Rank	Top	Bottom	Released By
Inclusive Internet Index 2020	46th	Sweden	Burundi	Economic Intelligence Unit
World Happiness Report 2020	144th	Finland		UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network
Heritage Foundation Index	120th	Singapore		Economic Freedom

Andhra Pradesh ranked 1st in country for overall implementation of Poshan Abhiyan

- **Andhra Pradesh** ranked 1st in the country for overall implementation of **Poshan Abhiyan** as per the recent report shared by NITI Aayog.
- As part of the programme the State has trained all Angan Wadi Workers on modules created based on lifecycle approach, i.e first 1000 days of life, with the support of incremental learning Approach (ILA).
- The State Government has given smart phones to all 55,607 angan wadi workers to improve service delivery and for reporting day to day actions, as well as to counsel the targeted beneficiaries through video embedded in application.

- The focus area of Poshan Pakhwada 2020 is 'Men for Nutrition – Increasing Male Engagement in POSHAN Abhiyaan to **Improve Nutritional Indicators**'.
- Tamil Nadu tops the list of the states in terms of the number of participants in the programme.

India ranks second in probes on foreign bribery, enforcement drags globally

- Enforcement actions globally slowed down in 2019 against trans-national bribery cases, but **India** is at the **second** place after **Brazil** in terms of the number of investigations concerning alleged bribery of domestic officials by foreign firms, a report stated.
- **China** showed the highest prevalence of alleged bribery by foreign firms, followed by **Iraq, Brazil, Nigeria and India**, as per the **10th Annual Global Enforcement Report of TRACE International**, a non-profit business association that tracks trends in global anti-bribery investigations and enforcement.
- The report stated 2019 was a relatively slow year for enforcement actions in transnational bribery cases.
- Both global and US enforcement numbers in cases involving bribery of foreign officials dropped, with a 19 per cent decrease in **US** enforcement actions and a 45 per cent dip in non-US enforcement actions, the data showed.

Animal Protection Index 2020

- India has scored 'C' ranking in the **Animal Protection Index 2020**. Some other countries like **Spain, New Zealand, France**, and **Mexico** also attained 'C' ranking in the index.
- Animal Protection Index 2020 released by World Animal Protection highlighted that India is improving in the area of animal protection. The objective of the Animal Protection Index (API) is to showcase what and how countries across the world are treating animals.
- It also aims to highlight countries that are doing well for animal welfare. Also, if they fall short on animal welfare policies they can take necessary steps to improve. The Animal Protection Index 2020 ranks various countries from A (highest score) to G (lowest score) as per their policies and constitutional system.
- No country has gained A grade.
- Austria, Denmark, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, United Kingdom attained B ranking.
- Azerbaijan and Iran attained last position i.e., G ranking

Taylor Swift tops Google's 2020 list of most-searched woman in music

- **Singer Taylor Swift** has been named as Google's **most-searched for woman in music of 2020**.
- **According to Google**, Swift topped the list of searches among women in music, while tennis player **Serena Williams** was the **most-searched for female athlete**.
- **Actress Awkwafina** was the **most searched-for woman in comedy**, and **novelist Toni Morrison** was the most-searched for **female author**.

Alibaba's Jack Ma Overtakes Reliance's Mukesh Ambani As Asia's Richest Man

- The fear of **coronavirus outbreak**, coupled with the collapse in oil prices and market breakdown has hurt **Reliance Industries** chairman **Mukesh Ambani's** net worth. India's richest man **slipped to the second spot in the Asia rankings**, after losing close to \$5.8 Bn from his net worth

- According to the **Bloomberg Billionaires Index**, **Alibaba's Jack Ma as Asia's richest man**. The list now shows the Alibaba founder with a **\$45.7 Bn** fortune, almost \$3.4 Bn more than Ambani's latest net worth.
- The Bloomberg Billionaires Index further revealed the net worth of other Indian tycoons such as the founder and chairman of HCL Shiv Nadar (\$14.7 Bn); Kotak Mahindra Bank MD Uday Kotak (\$13.4 Bn); chairman and CEO of ArcelorMittal Lakshmi Mittal (\$9.83 Bn); and founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises Sunil Mittal (\$8.39 Bn) among others.
- In the overall world's ranking, **Bill Gates Is World's Richest Man Again**, Ambani stood at 19th spot, falling from 13th spot last year, followed by Shiv Nadar (84), Uday Kotak (98), Lakshmi Mittal (144) and Sunil Mittal (181).

Gujarat tops in domestic solar rooftop installations

- To achieve renewable power generation goals, **Gujarat** has topped the list in the installations of solar rooftop plants across the country with about 50,915 systems being fixed on domestic rooftops in the State as on March 2, 2020.
- **Maharashtra** follows with 5,513 installations as on the same date. Of 79,950 systems installed across the country, **Gujarat** has topped with 64 per cent or two-thirds of total domestic solar rooftop installations.
- The State government has adopted a solar rooftop scheme — **Surya Gujarat** — to cover about eight lakh domestic electricity consumers under the scheme by **2022**. The Government had also relaxed subsidy criteria for domestic users with up to 40 per cent subsidy on the cost of projects up to 3 kWh capacity, while 20 per cent subsidy assistance is being provided for project with capacity between 3 and 10 kWh.
- The State government has also allotted ₹912 crore for the scheme. As per the scheme, the electricity generated through the domestic rooftops is being consumed by the households, while the excess units are purchased by the State discoms at the rate of ₹2.25 per unit.

India was world's second-largest arms importer in 2015-19: Report

- India remained the **world's second largest arms importer** during the period 2015-19, with **Russia** being the largest supplier though Moscow's share of the Indian weapons market declined from 72% to 56%, a leading think tank that tracks arms transfers stated in its annual report .
- In its annual "Trends in international arms transfers 2019" report, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) listed the world's top five arms importers during the five-year period as **Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and China**. Together, the five accounted for 36% of all arms imports, the report stated.
- The report placed India **23rd** among the world's **25 largest arms exporters**, with its main clients being Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Mauritius.

India ranks 12th in ultra-high net worth individuals

- The world witnessed an increase of 31,000 **ultra-high net worth individuals (UHNWIs)** in 2019. This translates into a 6.4 per cent jump over 2018.
- According to **Knight Frank**, **India** ranks **12th** and had 5,986 such individuals in 2019, which is likely to reach 10,354 by 2024. The number of billionaires in India, on the other hand, is likely to reach 113 by 2024, up from 104 in 2019. **Topped by US**

- Of the top 20 fastest growing countries that they measure, six are located in Asia (led by India with 73 per cent growth), five in Europe (led by Sweden with 47 per cent growth) and three are in Africa (led by Egypt with 66 per cent growth).

BRAC retains its position as the top NGO of the world for the 5th consecutive year

- **Bangladesh-based** international development organization **BRAC** has retained its position as the **top NGO of the world** for the 5th consecutive year.
- The rankings for 2020 were announced by the **Geneva-based organization NGO Adviser** which publishes the rankings every year based on publicly available data for the top 500 global NGOs.
- The ranking focuses on the impact, innovation, governance and sustainability of the NGO.
- BRAC recently announced a new 2030 strategy with the goal to make lives of 250 million people self-sustainable.

Tamil Nadu tops in Poshan Abhiyan's participants list

- **Tamil Nadu** tops the list of the states in terms of the number of participants in the **flagship programme Poshan Abhiyan**.
- Poshan Abhiyan for improving the nutritional status of Indian citizens. It helps children, adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers by leveraging technology, a targeted approach and convergence. The importance being given to the programme is evident from the fact that as many as fourteen Central Departments and all the State Governments are being involved in the programme.
- The Integrated Child Development Scheme has been in force for long in the southern state that has got rejuvenated with the Centre's Poshan Abhiyaan mission.

Bengaluru continues to record highest number of digital transactions

- **Bengaluru** accounted for the **highest number of digital transactions** in India in 2019, followed by Chennai, Mumbai and Pune, while **United Payments Interface (UPI)** was **the most preferred mode of payment**, by online payment processor **Worldline India**.
- **Bengaluru** was the leading city in digital transactions in 2018 as well.
- UPI was followed by debit cards, immediate payment service (IMPS), and credit cards, in terms of volume share of digital transactions.
- Even though Bengaluru topped the list in term of online payment volumes, the state of **Maharashtra** led the pack among the top 10 states with **the highest number of digital transactions**. States including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Delhi held the next three positions in term of online payment volumes.
- National Payment Council of India (NPCI) operated UPI recorded around 10.8 billion transactions in 2019, a 188% year-on-year (YoY). In terms of value, UPI facilitated transactions worth Rs18.36 trillion in 2019, up 214% YoY compared to 2018.
- On the other hand, the transaction value of debit cards stood at Rs6.8 trillion in 2019 while transaction value of credit cards stood at Rs7.1 trillion in the same year, registering YoY growth of 21% and 33% respectively.

- Number of debit cards transactions at point-of-sale (PoS) terminals stood at 4.9 trillion in 2019, a 16% growth as compared with previous the year. While the number of credit card transactions at PoS machines stood at 2 trillion in 2019, achieving a 20% YoY growth.

India shares second position with China as most promising source of disruptive technologies

- **India** surged back to tie the **second position with China** in **KPMG's 2020** global technology industry innovation survey which includes responses from more than 800 global leaders in the technology industry. **United States (US)** topped the survey.
- **KPMG's study** shows which cities, in addition to **presumed global leader Silicon Valley/San Francisco**.
- Bengaluru's entry in the top 10 rankings is another sign that the city is doing well in the areas of modern infrastructure, attracting skilled talent and investment.
- **Singapore**, seventh last year, leaped to the **top** of this year's global rankings. London moved up one notch to second.
- Tel Aviv, 15th last year, rocketed to third place. **Bengaluru** ranked **9th**, jumping from 18th a year ago.

Delhi's IGI airport ranked world's best in over 40 MPPA Category

- **Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA)**, which is undergoing a major expansion, has emerged as the best airport in the over 40 million passengers per annum (MPPA) category in Asia-Pacific by the Airports Council International's Airport Service Quality Programme (ASQ) 2019 rankings.
- The IGIA had retained the world's second best airport position for three consecutive years till 2013. "In 2014, it stepped up its position to World No. 1 in the 25-40 MPPA category and retained the rank in 2015," DIAL stated in a statement.
- The Delhi Airport has been adjudged as the world's best airport in the highest category of more than 40 million passengers per annum consecutively in 2017 and 2018."

Byju Raveendran, Zomato's Gaurav Gupta on WEF's Young Global Leaders list

- Byju Classes' founder **Byju Raveendran** and Zomato's co-founder **Gaurav Gupta** are among the five Indians named by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in its new list of 115 Young Global Leaders .
- Announcing the list, Geneva-based WEF stated these '**change-makers**' from as many as 52 countries are working in areas ranging from revamping of health systems to investigating corruption while using their power of the under 40s to change the world.
- The other three Indians on the list are Tara Singh Vachani (CEO of Antara Senior Living), Vinati Mutreja (Managing Director and CEO, Vinati Organics Limited), and Swapan Mehra (CEO, Iora Ecological Solutions).

Indian chess Grand Master Humpy ranked World No.2

- **Women's World Rapid Chess Champion** and Indian chess Grand Master (GM) **Koneru Humpy** jumped to second spot leaving behind World Women's Chess Champion **Ju Wenjun** in global chess body FIDE's March month's overall ranking. Humpy won the prestigious Cairns Cup last month.
- Meanwhile Indian female chess players are keeping the nation's flag flying high with GM **Harika Dronavalli** maintaining her ninth rank and in the girl's section R. Vaishali moving up to ninth place from 10th rank in February.

- In the juniors section, Indian **GM Nihal Sarin** was ranked 10th in the world.
- Incidentally, no Indian male figures in the top ten in the world's open section. Former World Champion V. Anand was ranked **16th** in the world, followed by **Vidit Santosh Gujarati** at 22nd rank. Gujarati the second top most ranked player in India moved up four places from the 26th rank last month.

India has 3rd highest trade-related illicit financial flow globally

- **India** has the **third highest trade-related illicit financial flow** among **135 countries** with **83.5 billion dollars** (about Rs 6.08 lakh crore) or **3.05 per cent** of gross domestic product (**GDP**) escaping the government's tax net, according to US-based think tank **Global Financial Integrity (GFI)**.
- The GFI classifies as illicit flow funds that are illegally earned, transferred or utilised across an international border. The primary sources of illicit flows include grand corruption, commercial tax evasion and transnational crime.
- In terms of averages over the **ten-year period**, the countries with the largest identified value gaps were nearly the same as those leading in **2017: China (482.4 billion dollars)**, Russia (92.6 billion dollars), Mexico (81.5 billion dollars), India (**78 billion dollars**) and Malaysia (64.1 billion dollars).
- In 2017, the value gap associated with trade misinvoicing amounted to 18 per cent of developing country trade

Rank	Country	Amount (USD)
1	China	457.7 billion
2	Mexico	85.3 billion
3	India	83.5 billion
4	Russia	74.8 billion
5	Poland	66.3 billion

UoH bags top score in QS World University Subject ranking

- The **University of Hyderabad (UoH)** has scored in 25 subjects and ranked in **three** in the **QS World University Subject rankings for 2020**.
- The three subjects in which UoH has secured high rankings are: **Chemistry 301-350; Biological Sciences 451-500; and Physics & Astronomy 501-550**.
- The QS methodology used four indicators to determine the institutions' rankings in the subjects — Academic Reputation, Employer Reputation, Citations per Paper and H-Index.
- QS World University Rankings is a publication of university rankings, published annually by British company Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

Important Books and Authors

Authors/ Released by	Books
Smriti Irani	Chronicles of Change Champions (Compilation of 25 innovative

	initiatives)
Naveen Patnaik	The Adventures of the Daredevil Democrat (Life of Biju Patnaik)
Tahira Kashyap	The 12 commandments of Being A Woman
Sadguru Patil and Mayabhushan Nagvenkar	An Extraordinary Life: A biography of Manohar Parrikar
Bhalchandra Mungekar	My Encounters in Parliament
Tarun Vijay	Invincible - A Tribute to Manohar Parrikar
Tavleen Singh	Messiah Modi: A Great Tale of Expectations
SavitaChhabra	Legacy of Learning
J M Coetzee	The Death of Jesus

National Book Trust of MHRD Launches #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks initiative

- **National Book Trust of HRD Ministry**, in its efforts to encourage people to read books while at home, is providing its select and best-selling titles for **FREE Download** as part of its initiative of **#StayHomeIndiaWithBooks!**. In the wake of Preventive Measures of the Government of India to contain the spread of Covid-19, and to encourage people to **#StayIn** and **#StayHome**
- The **100+ books, in PDF format, can be downloaded** from the NBT's website <https://nbtindia.gov.in>. Available in Hindi, English, Asamiya, Bangla, Gujarati, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Kokborok, Mizo, Bodo, Nepali, Tamil, Punjabi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu and Sanskrit, the books cover all genres of fiction, biography, popular science, teacher's handbook, and majorly books for children and young adults. In addition, there are books by Tagore, by Premchand, and books on Mahatma Gandhi.
- Some select titles include, Holidays Have Come, Animals You can't Forget, Nine Little Birds, The Puzzle, Gandhi Tatva Satkam, Women Scientists in India, Activity-Based Learning Science, A Touch of Glass, Gandhi: Warrior of Non-Violence, and many more.

National Book Trust, India of MHRD to launch 'Corona Studies Series' books

- **National Book Trust, India**, the national body for book publishing and book promotion **under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India**, is launching a publishing series titled '**Corona Studies Series**' to document and to provide relevant reading materials for all age-groups for the post-Corona readership needs.
- The '**Corona Studies Series**' seeks to prepare and engage readers with the various aspects of the Corona times by bringing out affordable books in various Indian languages in the identified subject areas.
- Accordingly, they started **#StayHomeIndiaWithBooks** initiatives by uploading pdfs of some of selected and best selling titles for free downloads.
- MHRD also set-up a Study Group comprising some experienced & young psychologists/ counsellors to prepare books on the sub-series '**Psycho-Social Impact of Corona Pandemic and the Ways to Cope**'.

Important Sports News

Cricket

Australia Beat India by 85 Runs To Clinch 5th Title

- Australia defeated first-time finalists India in the 2020 Women's T20 World Cup final in Melbourne to clinch the title for a record-extending fifth time.
- This is Australia's fifth title in the last six editions of the Women's T20 World Cup.
- The match witnessed Australia register the highest-ever total (184/4) in a Women's T20 World Cup final.

Shafali Verma Becomes Youngest Player to Appear in ICC Cricket World Cup Final

- India's batting prodigy Shafali Verma claimed a slice of history when she became the youngest cricketer (male or female) to play in the final ICC Cricket World Cup.
- Shafali, who is 16 years and 40 days old, took the field for India in front of a packed crowd at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground in their 2020 Women's T20 World Cup final against Australia.
- She thus broke the record previously held by West Indies' Shaquana Quintyne, who was 17 years and 45 days old when she took the field for the West Indies in the 2013 women's World Cup final.
- Pakistan's Mohammad Amir is third on the list as he was 17 years and 69 days old when he played in the 2009 ICC Men's World T20 final.

Poonam Yadav lone Indian in team of tournament dominated by champions Australia

- Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav was the lone Indian to make the ICC Women's T20 playing XI of the World Cup, which featured teenage sensation Shafali Verma as the 12th player and was dominated by champions Australia.
- Five players from Australia's victorious team made the side of the tournament.
- Defending champions Australia claimed their fifth title following an 85-run triumph over first-time finalists India on Sunday in Melbourne.
- Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Meg Lanning, Jess Jonassen and Megan Schutt were included along with four England players.

Jaydev Unadkat-led Saurashtra beat Bengal to clinch maiden Ranji Trophy title

- **Saurashtra** led by **Jaydev Unadkat** lifted their maiden **Ranji Trophy** beating Bengal on the basis of the first-innings lead at Rajkot
- Unadkat, who had single-handedly taken Saurashtra into the final with a seven-wicket haul against Gujarat on the final day of their semifinal, rose to the occasion yet again to a historic victory.
- The left-arm pacer ended as the season's leading wicket-taker with 67 scalps at a staggering average of 13.23, one short of an all-time record.
- In the second innings, all Saurashtra had to do was to bat before both captains decided to call off the game and shake hands.

- They eventually did that at tea time after Saurashtra sauntered 105 for four in 34 overs. With the win, **Saurashtra** ended their **Ranji Trophy** title drought while a fighting **Bengal** will have to wait longer for their first crown since the 1989-90 season.

Football

Mohun Bagan are the Hero I-League Champions 2019-2020

- Indian **football** heavyweights **Mohun Bagan** clinched their second I-League title with a 1-0 win over **Aizawl FC at Kalyani, West Bengal**. Their first I-League title came in 2014-15 season.
- Senegalese striker Baba Diawara scored the all-important goal for Mohun Bagan in the 80th minute. Bagan lifted the title even when four rounds are still to go in the season.
- **Mohun Bagan** have 39 points from 16 matches. This put Bagan 16 points ahead of second-placed East Bengal who cannot catch up their arch city rivals even if they win all their four remaining matches.

Sunil Chhetri chosen for FIFA campaign against COVID-19

- India football captain **Sunil Chhetri** has been picked by FIFA along with 28 past and present stars for world governing body's awareness campaign to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **FIFA and the World Health Organization (WHO) have teamed up to combat the coronavirus** by launching a **new awareness campaign led by world-renowned footballers**, who are calling on all people around the world to follow five key steps to stop the spread of the disease.
- The **'Pass the message to kick out coronavirus'** campaign promotes five key steps for people to follow to protect their health in line with WHO guidance, focused on hand washing, coughing etiquette, not touching your face, physical distance and staying home if feeling unwell.
- The **28 players**, who will be involved in the video campaign to be published in **13 languages**, include some of the best known players like Argentine superstar **Lionel Messi** and World Cup winners like **Philip Lahm, Iker Casillas and CarlesPuyol**.
- The Players: Sami Al Jaber (KSA), Alisson Becker (BRA), EmreBelözoglu (TUR), Jared Borgetti (MEX), Gianluigi Buffon (ITA), Iker Casillas (ESP), Sunil Chhetri (IND), YouriDjorkaeff (FRA), Han Duan (CHN), Samuel Eto'o (CMR), RadamelFalcao (COL), Laura Georges (FRA), ValeriKarpin (RUS), MiroslavKlose (GER), Philipp Lahm (GER), Gary Lineker (ENG), Carli Lloyd (USA), Lionel Messi (ARG), Mido (EGY), Michael Owen (ENG), Park Ji-sung (KOR), CarlesPuyol (ESP), Celia Sasic (GER), AsakoTakakura (JPN), ayaTouré (CIV), Juan SebastiánVerón (ARG), Sun Wen (CHN), Xavi Hernández (ESP).

Other Sports News

First ever Khelo India Winter Games begin at Gulmarg in Kashmir

- Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the **five-day Khelo India Winter games** at famous tourist destination **Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- During the event, the competitions in the sports disciplines like snow skiing, snow boarding, snow shoeing, ski mountaineering and snow baseball would be held.

- Government of India will establish a Sports Training Academy at Gulmarg at the level of International standards for the promotion of sports tourism in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Tokyo Olympics organisers eyeing July 2021 to start Games postponed due to Coronavirus

- Tokyo Olympics organisers are eyeing **next July** as a start date for the postponed Games following the historic decision to delay the event due to the coronavirus
- Japanese public broadcaster NHK, citing sources within the organising panel, stated that given the ongoing pandemic and need for preparation time, the most likely plan would be for the Games to begin on **July 23, 2021**
- The move comes after Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike raised the idea of moving the event to a less hot and humid time of year. The Tokyo 2020 team led by Yoshiro Mori is currently discussing possible dates with the International Olympic Committee, IOC

French Open tennis tournament postponed till September

- The **French Open Tennis** has been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and will take place from 20th September to 4th October. Organisers stated, the Grand Slam event was to have taken place from 24th May to 7th June.
- The new dates would mean the tournament would start just one week after the US Open, if that event remains in its scheduled slot

Tokyo 2020 Games organisers receive Olympic flame

- Organisers of the **Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games** received the Olympic flame in a scaled-down handover ceremony in the **Greek capital**, amid the coronavirus spread that has cast doubt on the July 24-August 9 global multi-billion dollar event.
- In a brief ceremony closed to spectators in Athens' **Panathenaic stadium**, site of the first modern Games in 1896, the torch was received by **Tokyo Games** representative **Naoko Imoto**. It will arrive in Japan and kick off a domestic relay on March 26

UEFA puts all competitions 'on hold', Euro 2020 postponed

- **Champions League** and **Europa League** matches are also halted.
- UEFA has put all club and national team competitions for men and women "on hold until further notice", European football's governing body stated in a statement, after deciding to postpone **Euro 2020** for a year due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- The play-offs for Euro 2020, which were scheduled for the end of March, will now be played at the start of June "subject to a review of the situation," stated the body.
- UEFA stated it has set up a "working group" involving leagues and club representatives to examine the overall calendar situation facing the game with the bulk of the continent's domestic championships having stopped play.

Taiwan's Tai Tzu Ying clinches her third women's singles title of All England Championships

- In Badminton, **Taiwan's shuttler Tai Tzu Ying** clinched her third women's singles title of the **All England Championships** at **Birmingham** in **United Kingdom**

- Ying beat China's **Chen Yufei** in two straight games 21-19, 21-15 in 44 minutes.
- Earlier in the **men's singles**, Denmark's **Victor Axelsen** outclassed Taiwan's **Chou Tien-Chen** in two straight games 21-13, 21-14 in the summit clash that lasted for about 46 minutes

FIDE Women's Grand Prix: Dronavalli Harika held to draw by Abdumalik in round 7

- Indian Grandmaster **Dronavalli Harika** was held to a draw by **Zhansaya Abdumalik** of **Kazakhstan** in the seventh round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament in Lausanne, Switzerland. She remained on four points, half a point behind two Russians.
- Russia's Alexandra Goryachkina and her compatriot Alena Kashlinskaya remained in joint lead after seven rounds, following draws against former world champion Mariya Muzychuk of Ukraine and Stefanova respectively.
- World champion Ju Wenjun's search for her first win in the tournament continued as she settled for her sixth draw against Frenchwoman Marie Sebag, at 2443, the lowest-rated player in the field. She had lost to Harika in the third round.
- The Chinese world No. 3 had three points and was lying in 9th place.

Mumbai set to host IOC session in 2023

- **Mumbai** is set to host the **2023 International Olympic Committee's session** after the IOC Executive Board recommended the Indian city for the annual conference.
- The IOC Executive Board decided to put Mumbai's candidature to a vote of the members. The decision is to be ratified at the **136th IOC session** in Tokyo in July this year.
- After ratification, this will be the second-ever IOC session to be held in India after a long gap of 37 years. India last hosted an IOC session way back in 1983 in New Delhi

Coronavirus: Delhi shooting World Cup postponed, Olympic test event in Tokyo cancelled

- The upcoming combined shooting World Cup in New Delhi has been postponed, while an Olympic test event in Tokyo has been cancelled due to the global novel Coronavirus outbreak.
- The tournament, sanctioned by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF), was to be held from March 15 to 25 in the capital's Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.
- The Olympic Test event was scheduled to be held from April 16. The Delhi event was to be a combined World Cup for rifle/pistol and shotgun shooters.
- In all, 22 countries had pulled out of the event. Last week, India pulled out of the ISSF World Cup in Cyprus, citing the coronavirus threat.

First Khelo India University Games concludes in Bhubaneswar; Panjab University, Chandigarh tops medals tally

- The Khelo India University Games concluded in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**. **Panjab University, Chandigarh** took home the champions trophy-winning 46 medals including 17 gold, 19 silver, and 10 bronze.
- **Savitribai Phule Pune University** claimed the second position and **Punjabi University, Patiala** declared as the second runners up. Punjabi University, Patiala won 33 medals including 13 gold, 6 silver, and 14 bronze medals. A total of 113 universities took part in the games.

Rafael Nadal wins Mexican Open title after beating Taylor Fritz

- World Number 2 **Rafael Nadal** captured his first title of the year, defeating unseeded **Taylor Fritz** in straight sets, 6-3, 6-2, in the final of the ATP Mexico Open.
- Nadal, playing in his first tournament since losing in the quarter-finals at the Australian Open, ousted Fritz in the first career meeting between the two. Nadal ceded the world number one ranking to Novak Djokovic after the Australian Open, where the Serb won a record eighth title.
- In the women's final, seventh-seeded **Heather Watson** captured her first WTA title in three years by grinding out a 6-4, 6-7, 6-1 win over Canadian teen Leylah Fernandez.

Novak Djokovic bests Stefanos Tsitsipas to lift fifth Dubai Championships title

- After saving match points to reach the final, top-ranked **Novak Djokovic** was scarcely troubled as he beat **Stefanos Tsitsipas** 6-3, 6-4 to win the Dubai Championships for the fifth time.
- The **17-time Grand Slam** champion maintained his unbeaten start to the year, having won the inaugural ATP Cup with Serbia and clinching a record-extending eighth Australian Open title. Djokovic's **79th** career title moves him five behind Rafael Nadal.

FIH rankings: Indian men's hockey team climbs to fourth position

- The Indian men's hockey team has climbed to the **fourth position**, their highest since the inception of the FIH world rankings in 2003, in the recently released chart.
- India's excellent form in the first three rounds of the second edition of FIH Hockey Pro-League has seen them move from **fifth to the fourth position**. India's rise comes at the expense of Olympic champions Argentina, who dropped to fifth place.
- World champions **Belgium** remains in pole position, with Australia 2nd and the Netherlands 3rd also holding their positions in the top three. Germany and England remain in sixth and seventh positions, while New Zealand is static at the eighth place after briefly dropping below Spain to ninth last month.
- In the women's list, **India** occupies the **ninth spot**. The **Netherlands** is at the top followed by Australia, Argentina, Germany and England.
- The new model for calculating the FIH world rankings was introduced on the 1st of January, 2020

Tasnim Mir, Mansi Singh win bronze at Yonex Dutch Junior International

- Young Indian shuttlers **Tasnim Mir** and **Mansi Singh** won a **bronze medal** each in the **girls' singles Badminton event** at the **Yonex Dutch Junior International 2020 in Haarlem, Netherlands**. It was the first time India won two bronze medals in girls' singles at this BWF Junior International Grand Prix tournament.
- Mir was defeated by third seed So Yul Lee of Korea 19-21, 10-22 in the semifinal to settle for Bronze. Mansi lost to Indonesia's Saifi Rizka Nurhidayah 11-21, 16-21 in the semifinal.
- Meanwhile, India's rising stars **Aakarshi Kashyap** and **Anupama Upadhyaya** won gold and silver medals respectively in the girls singles at Kenya International held in Thika, Kenya. The sixth-seeded Kashyap defeated Haryana girl Anupama 21-15, 21-6 who had reached the final after toppling second, third and fifth seeds.

Rampaging ATK grab historic third ISL title

- A rampaging ATK claimed an unprecedented third Indian Super League (ISL) title triumph with a 3-1 victory over arch-rival Chennaiyin FC in a summit showdown that was played behind closed doors.
- Javier Hernandez (10th) and Edu Garcia (48th) put ATK in the driving seat but Nerijus Valskis (69th) reduced their advantage to set up a tense end to the contest.
- Hernandez scored another in injury time (90+4th) to confirm a record third title.

Canada becomes first country to withdraw from 2020 Tokyo Olympic

- The 2020 **Olympic and Paralympic Games** in Tokyo have been thrown into further doubt after **Canada** became the first major country to withdraw. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has admitted for the first time that the games could be postponed.
- Australia has stated, it is clear the games cannot go ahead and told its athletes to prepare for 2021 games. The International Olympic Committee is expected to decide the fate of the games in four weeks' time .The games are currently due to begin on **24th July**.
- The International Olympic Committee is a non-governmental sports organisation based in Lausanne, Switzerland. Founded by Pierre de Coubertin and DemetriosVikelas in 1894, it is the authority responsible for organising the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

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68th All India Police Athletic Championship kick starts in Haryana

- 68th **All India Police Athletic Championship-2019** began at **Bhanu** in **Panchkula District** of **Haryana** . Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju declared the meet open at Basic Training Centre of ITBP.
- Mr Rijiju stated that with an aim to bring India in top 10 in the Olympics scheduled in 2028, the government has identified 15,000 plus children and started their training across 284 Sports Authority of India (SAI) training centres across the country.
- He stated, to achieve this goal, the role of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and State Police organisations becomes very important. Efforts shall be made to assign few games to each force so that we can get good results in Olympics after 8 years.

Revision Points

Organization	Headquarters	Key Person
All India Football Federation	Dwarka, Delhi	Praful Patel
Union of European Football Association	Nyon, Switzerland	Aleksander Ceferin
United Nations	New York, USA	António Guterres
Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)	New Delhi	Rita Teatota
NASSCOM	New Delhi	Rishad Premji
Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)	Bengaluru	K Sivan
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	Washington DC, USA	James Frederick "Jim" Bridenstine
World Economic Forum (WEF)	Cologne, Switzerland	Klaus Schwab
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	Beijing, China	Jin Lique
World Bank	Washington D.C, USA	David Malpass
Asian Development Bank	Mandaluyong, Philippines	Masatsugu Asakawa
International Cricket Council (ICC)	Dubai, UAE	Manu Sawhney
Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)	New Delhi	DilipChenoy
International Hockey Federation (FIH)	Lausanne, Switzerland	Narinder Batra
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	New York, USA	Henrietta H. Fore
World Health Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	Tedros Adhanom
World Intellectual Property Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	Francis Gurry
National Book Trust	New Delhi	Govind Prasad Sharma
Defence Research Development Organization	New Delhi	Sateesh Reddy
Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)	Bengaluru	Walchand Hirachand (Founder)
International Telecommunications Union	Geneva, Switzerland	Houlin Zhao
Indian Council of Medical Research	New Delhi	Balram Bhargava

Important Mergers and Acquisitions

NCLT approves NBCC bid to acquire Jaypee Infratech via insolvency

- State-owned NBCC got approval from the NCLT to acquire debt-laden **Jaypee Infratech** through an insolvency process and complete around 20,000 pending flats over the next three and half years.
- The Principal bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), headed by Acting President **BSV Prakash Kumar**, gave a go-ahead to the resolution plan of NBCC.
- In a significant direction that will help NBCC in faster completion of stuck projects of Jaypee Group, the tribunal ordered that the Rs 750 crore deposited by Jaypee Infratech's parent firm Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) with the registry of the Supreme Court would be part of the resolution plan.
- Jaypee Infratech went into an insolvency process in August 2017. In December last year, a committee of creditors (CoC) comprising 13 banks and around 21,000 homebuyers, approved the resolution plan of NBCC with 97.36 per cent vote in favour.
- NBCC's proposal was approved by the lenders in the third round of bidding process to find a buyer for Jaypee Infratech. In its bid, NBCC had proposed to complete over 20,000 pending flats in housing projects launched by Jaypee Infratech in Noida and Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh).

Chennai Port acquires majority stake in Kamarajar Port

- **Chennai Port Trust (ChPT)** acquired 67% stake of its subsidiary Kamarajar Port Ltd. (KPL) for ₹2,383 crore.
- The KPL was promoted by the Central government holding about 67 per cent stake and Chennai Port holding the balance about 33 per cent.
- However both the ports will function as separate entities while deriving benefits of synergies in terms of investments and operations.
- Chennai Port will continue to focus on clean cargo like container, cars, liquid cargo, cruise and passenger traffic and on the utilisation of existing capacity to the maximum possible extent.
On the other hand, KPL will plan and create additional capacity for bulk and all other types of cargo which will result in avoiding duplication of capacity creation.
- In terms of capacity, Chennai Port has a capacity to handle 100 million tons of cargo while KPL has 67 million tons.

NTPC concludes acquisition of govt's stake in THDC, NEEPCO at Rs 11,500 cr

- **NTPC** concluded the acquisition of Centre's entire stake in two hydropower generating firms, **THDC India** and **North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO)**, at **Rs 11,500 crore**.
- The company informed the exchanges that it signed share purchase agreement to buy the government's entire **74.49 per cent stake of THDC** for an aggregate consideration of **Rs 7,500 crore**.

Cognizant acquires US-based digital marketing firm

- **Cognizant Technology Solutions** announced it has entered into an agreement to acquire **Lev**, a privately-held, digital marketing consultancy in the US.

- Lev helps businesses simplify and modernise their marketing campaigns using Salesforce Marketing Cloud to provide data-driven insight and personalisation across the customer journey, and ultimately drive revenue.
- The acquisition will further expand Cognizant's Salesforce practice and is expected to close in the first quarter of 2020, subject to satisfaction of certain closing conditions.

Revision points

Company	Merging Company
Cognizant	Lev
NTPC	THDC India & North Eastern Electric Power Corporation
Chennai Port Trust	Kamarajar Port Ltd
NBCC	Jaypee Infratech

Important Web Portals and Mobile Apps

Government Launches Humsafar Mobile App For Doorstep Diesel Delivery

- Housing societies, hotels, and hospitals in the national capital region will soon be able to get diesel delivered at their doorsteps, with the launch of mobile application '**Humsafar**' by Labour Minister **Santosh Gangwar**.
- The app will be used for the fuel delivery services to housing societies, hotels, hospitals, malls, construction sites, industries, banquets and other bulk buyers of diesel in various national capital region cities, including Gurugram, Ghaziabad, Noida, Faridabad, Hapur, Kundli, Manesar, and Bahadurgarh.
- The major benefits of diesel delivery service are good quality and quantity of fuel delivered, live tracking of the delivery vehicle, automated billing, delivery within 8 hours and no spillage and wastage of fuel. Humsafar has 12 bowser tankers in varying capacity from 4 kilo litres to 6 kilo litres and an experienced team of 35 people, excluding bowser crews.

Karnataka develops app to track home quarantined persons

- The **Karnataka government** has devised a **GPS coordinate-based mechanism** that tracks persons under order of home quarantine and has instructed them to send selfies or photos to the monitoring team to ensure they are following the isolation norms.
- The government has developed the mobile app and is instructing all persons under order of home quarantine to send their selfies to the government every one hour from home, stated State Medical Education Minister K Sudhakar.
- The selfie or photo contains **GPS coordinates**. So the location of the sender gets known. If the home quarantine person fails to send a selfie every hour (except sleep time, from 10 pm to 7 am), the government team will reach such defaulters and they are liable to be shifted to a government-created mass quarantine facility, he added.
- Every selfie is examined by a government photo verification team. "So, if wrong photos are sent, too, defaulters will be shifted to a mass quarantine facility," stated Sudhakar.

- The government has also launched the **Corona Watch app**, which can be downloaded from www.karnataka.gov.in. This allows the user to track the spots visited by patients up to 14 days prior to testing positive. Also, it shows the nearest first respondent hospitals and helpline numbers.

IIT Bombay develops two apps to track violations by those in quarantine

- **IIT-Bombay** has come up with two mobile applications that can track violations by people supposed to be in quarantine.
- Developed by the Computer Science and Engineering department, the apps are called "**Corontine**" and "**Safe**".
- While **Corontine** can register asymptomatic carriers and track them to check if they are confined to their quarantined zones, **Safe** checks for **violations by those asked to be home-quarantined**.
- The proposals regarding both apps have been sent to various authorities, including officials in the Ministry of Human Resource and Development, NitiAayog, the Maharashtra government and the BMC.
- The **Corontine platform and app** can be helpful for authorities in **checking if suspected carriers are confined in their quarantined zones**. It allows geo-fencing and automatically generates alerts (sms, email, etc.) if users move out of the quarantined zone.
- The Safe app has been in use by several students of IIT Bombay to mark their attendance in class or exams.

Government of India launches coronavirus tracking app Corona Kavach

- The Government of India has launched a **coronavirus risk-tracking app** called '**Corona Kavach**.' Jointly developed by the **Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** and the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, the app uses a person's location to assess whether they are in the high risk geographical zone or not. The app is now available for download in beta for Android phones on the Google Play Store.
- Corona Kavach is designed to provide information about COVID-19 and capture information. It will track the data of the users every one hour to alert them of whether they have crossed paths with any person who has tested positive for the infection.

ITU launches Global Network Resiliency Platform

- The **International Telecommunications Union**, (ITU) is launching a "**Global Network Resiliency Platform**" to help protect telecoms networks during the COVID-19 crisis.
- The initiative is designed to help both national governments and the private sector to ensure that networks are "safer and stronger", "kept resilient" and are "more connected" to ensure that telecoms services remain "available to all."
- The new platform will help national policy-makers, regulators and industry stakeholders to ensure that network efficiency is maximised via the sharing of best practices and various initiatives put in place during the pandemic.
- This will be effected by the collection of "relevant and trustworthy information and expertise on actions that telecommunication policy-makers, regulators and others in the regulatory community can use to ensure that their telecommunication networks and services serve the needs of their country.
- The Global Network Resiliency Platform is currently a static information source but the ITU will soon transmute it into a continuously-updated interactive platform for sharing "throughout this crisis and beyond.

R K Singh Launched New Website of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

- The Minister of State (I/C) for Power and New and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Shri R K Singh launched the new website of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- The new website is developed looking in to the present need of quick and accurate information dissemination needs of the Ministry with latest techniques to make it more **informative, interactive and user friendly including persons with visual disabilities**.
- The key feature of the website includes optimized user interface, three click interfaces, rubik's cube structure and improvised search options. Structured back end content management system (CMS) is developed to manage the website with minimum sources and less time consuming.
- The website has additional portals such as 'Akshay Urja Portal' and 'India Renewable Idea Exchange' (IRIX). Well identifiable links are provided for all the activities of the Ministry to provide the information at ease.

BhoomiRashi portal significantly expedited land acquisition for National Highways

- The 'BhoomiRashi' Portal launched in March 2018 has significantly expedited the process of land acquisition for National Highways.
- The ministry claims that the portal has made the process error-free and more transparent with notifications at every stage being processed on a real-time basis.
- The portal has been integrated with the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** for depositing the compensation in the account of affected/ interested persons on a real-time basis.
- This integration has resulted in avoiding the parking of huge public funds in the account of the Competent Authority for Land Acquisition.

SEBI launches mobile app 'Sebi SCORES' for investors to lodge grievances

- Markets regulator Sebi has launched a mobile application for convenience of investors to lodge grievances in **Sebi Complaints Redress System (SCORES)**.
- The app, 'Sebi SCORES', is available on both iOS and Android platforms.
- **SCORES' mobile app** will make it easier for investors to **lodge their grievances** with Sebi, as they can now access SCORES at their convenience of a smartphone. The mobile app will encourage investors to lodge their complaints on SCORES rather than sending letters to Sebi in physical mode.
- After mandatory registration on the application, investors will get an acknowledgement through SMS and e-mail for each grievance lodged. Investors can also track the status of their complaint redressal.
- Sebi has received about 40,000 complaints every year on an average.

'NIGHA' app launched to curb poll irregularities in Andhra Pradesh

- Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched the **NIGHA App** through which citizens can lodge complaints against leaders who are resorting to Model Code of Conduct violations.

- The app was developed by the **Panchayat Raj department**, in a bid to crackdown on electoral malpractices. Through the app, common citizens can lodge complaints on poll malpractices from any part of the State. Officials stated any citizen can download the NIGHA App in their smart phones.
- The photos and videos of distribution of money and alcohol and any other activity that violates Model Code of Conduct can be uploaded through this app.
- The complaints registered through this app will be routed automatically to the Central Control Room and the information will be shared with the officials concerned, who will take stringent action against the persons responsible for the violations.

COVA Punjab App Launched To Spread Awareness

- Punjab Government launched **COVA Punjab App** to Spread awareness and provide tips.
- A new app dubbed COVA Punjab has appeared on the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store.
- The COVA Punjab app aims to sensitize people and spread awareness about the COVID-19. Here, COVA stands for **Coronavirus Alert**.
- The mobile application includes a list of information related to the COVID-19 including awareness, preventive measures, traveling information, and even advisories for precaution.
- The COVA Punjab mobile app is developed by the Department of Government Reforms and Public Grievances.

Revision Points

Applications/Web portals	Launched By
COVA (Corona Virus Alert) App	Punjab
NIGHA App	Andhra Pradesh CM
Sebi SCORES	SEBI
New Website of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy	RK Singh
Global Network Resiliency Platform	International Telecommunications Union
Corona Kvach	Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology and Ministry of Family and Welfare
Corontine & Safe	IIT Bombay
Corona Watch App	Karnataka
Humsafar	Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar

Important Peoples' in News

Tiger Woods to be inducted into World Golf Hall of Fame in 2021 class

- American golfer **Tiger Woods** will be inducted into the **World Golf Hall of Fame** as part of the class of **2021**. The hall of fame, located in St. Augustine, Florida, released a saying Woods, winner of 15 major titles, will be inducted in the male competitor category.

- Woods was among 10 finalists named in March as candidates for **2021**. His 93 worldwide victories include a record-tying 82 US PGA Tour titles. He won his 15th major title at the Masters last April, ending an 11-year major drought after career-threatening injuries.
- Woods is a three-time winner of the career Grand Slam and in 2000-01 completed the "**Tiger Slam**" when he became the first golfer since Bobby Jones to hold all four major championship titles at the same time. The 2021 class was chosen by Hall's selection committee, a 20-member panel.

Indian shot putter Navin Chikara suspended for four years for flunking dope test

- The integrity unit of the **global athletics body** has suspended Indian shot putter **Navin Chikara** for four years for failing an out-of-competition dope test in 2018.
- Chikara, 23, has been banned for using a prohibited substance and his suspension period is effective from July 27, 2018, the Athletics Integrity Unit of the **International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)** stated.
- Chikara had won a silver at the 2018 Federation Cup apart from finishing runner-up at the inter-state championships in the same year.
- In November 2018, a provisional suspension was imposed on Chikara, who later waived his right to have the B sample analysed.

Shilpa Shetty Kundra partners with Fit India

- **Fit India**, has partnered with **Bollywood actor** and **fitness icon Shilpa Shetty Kundra** to provide her premium 21-Day Weight Loss Programme, including diet tips, free of cost on the **Shilpa Shetty App (SS App)**, during the 21-day lockdown owing to Covid-19.
- The **Sports Minister Kiren Rijju** launched the programme through his social media handles and shared the link to the App that everyone can access.
- The decision taken by Shilpa Shetty to allow the Indian and global audience to access her fitness programme for free, is commendable.

Priyanka Chopra collaborates with WHO to spread awareness over COVID-19

- **Actor Priyanka Chopra** urged followers to rely on authentic sources of information about coronavirus and arranged an Instagram live with top personnel of the **World Health Organization (WHO)** to raise awareness about the pandemic.
- The live will be joined by **Dr. Tedros, director-general of WHO**, and **Maria Van Kerkhove** who is a **technical lead for COVID-19 at the WHO**. **CEO of Global Citizen, Hugh Evans**, too would be joining the live video.

Satyarup Siddhanta becomes first Indian to complete volcanic Seven Summit, enters 'Limca Book of Records'

- **Siddhanta** has been nominated for the coveted **Limca Book of World Records** for his extra-ordinary achievement to be the first Indian to climb the **highest volcanoes of each of the 7 continents**.
- After Guinness Book of World Records, the Bengaluru-based 37-years-old techie mountaineer is now shining on the prestigious index of 'Limca Book of records'.
- He climbed the highest volcano of **Antarctica - Mt Sidley** to complete his 7 summits and Volcanic 7 summits.

- His Seven volcanic summits are: Ojos del Salado (6,893 m) - Chile - South America, Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 m) - Tanzania - Africa, Mount Elbrus (5,642 m) - Russia - Europe, Mount Pico de Orizaba (5,636 m) - Mexico - North America, Mt Damavand (5,610 m) - Iran - Asia, Mt Giluwe (4,368 m) - Papua New Guinea - Australia and Mt Sidley (4,285 m) - Antarctica.
- He is also the first Indian in the world to play the **National anthem with flute** at **Antarctica - Champions book of records**.

Sachin Tendulkar joins WHO's Safe Hands Challenge amid coronavirus pandemic

- Cricket legend **Sachin Tendulkar** joined WHO's **#SafeHandsChallenge** to promote the importance of washing hands amid the coronavirus outbreak.
- In a video shared by the Master Blaster, Tendulkar is seen washing his hands thoroughly and also talking about the importance of washing hands with soap.
- In an attempt to spread the importance of hygiene amid the coronavirus pandemic, star Indian athlete **Hima Das** also took up the #SafeHands challenge and urged the likes of Tendulkar, **M.C. Mary Kom**, **Sania Mirza** and **Rani Rampal** to take it forward.
- Earlier, ace Indian shuttler **P.V. Sindhu** had also taken up the challenge and had posted a video on Twitter in which she was seen washing her hands with soap for almost 30 seconds.

Hyderabad boy Amgoth Tukaram scales highest Oz peak

- **Amgoth Tukaram** has scaled new heights. The 22-year-old from Hyderabad conquered Mt. Kosciuszko, the highest peak in Australia.
- Tukaram is the youngest mountaineer from India who has scaled five of the seven toughest and highest peaks in the world — **Mt. Killimanjaro (19,308 ft) in Africa** on July 4, 2018; **Mt. Everest (29,029 ft) in Nepal** on May 22, 2019; **Mt. Elbrus (18,510 ft) in Russia** on July 27, 2019; **Mt. Aconcagua (22,837 ft) in South America** on January 26, 2020 and **Mt Kosciusko in Australia** on March 10,2020.

India's first culinary arts museum at WGSMA enters Limca Book of Records, founded by chef Vikas Khanna

- **Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Management (WGSMA)** of Manipal Academy of Higher Education entered the **Limca Book of Records** for **establishing 'India's First Living Culinary Arts Museum'** at WGSMA.
- The process for WGSMA's culinary museum to make an entry into the popular Limca Book of Records started almost six months back and after validation by LBR recently, has been listed in the book of records.
- **Celebrity chef Vikas Khanna** is the Founder and curator of India's first living culinary arts museum at WGSMA. It was his idea which led to the establishment of this culinary museum.
- The Museum consists of historical as well as household items such as plates made by the Portuguese in India, an old seed sprinkler, an ancient Kashmiri tea brewer known as 'samovar', a 100-year-old ladle used to dole out food at temples and bowls dating to the Harappan era.

Sindhu wins TOISA Sportsperson of Year award

- World champion **shuttler PV Sindhu** was named **Sportsperson of the Year** while India's star **batsman Rohit Sharma** was named the **cricketer of the year** at the fourth **Times of India Sports Awards (TOISA) 2019** in **New Delhi**.
- Former India football captain **Bhaichung Bhutia** was given the **Lifetime Achievement award**, while hockey legend and three-time Olympic gold medallist **Balbir Singh Sr** was honoured with the **Icon of the Century award**.
- National badminton coach **Pulella Gopichand** won the **Mentor of the Year award**, while former shooter **Jaspal Rana** was recognized as the **Coach of the Year**.
- The Olympic-bound **Indian men's hockey** was adjudged **Team of the Year** while the women's hockey side **skipper Rani** won the **Inspiration of the Year award**.
- Young shooter **Anish Bhanwala** and women's hockey team forward **Lalremsiami** was selected for the **Emerging Players of the Year awards**.
- Olympic medallist boxer **Vijender Singh** was adjudged as the **Youth Icon of the Year**.
- India skipper **Sunil Chhetri** won the **recognition in football**.
- **Deepika Kumari** and **Abhishek Verma** won the **Archer of the Year** in female and male categories respectively.
- **Sindhu** bagged a hat-trick of awards when she was named as the **Badminton Player of the Year in female category**, while **B Sai Praneeth** got the recognition among **male** shuttlers.
- It was double delight for hockey skipper **Rani** who was adjudged **women hockey player of the year** while drag-flicker **Harmanpreet** won the recognition in the **men's category**.
- **Saurabh Chaudhary** and **Manu Bhaker** won the **Shooter of the Year** in male and female categories respectively.
- **Sindhu** wins third straight **ESPN's Female Sportsperson of the Year award**
- India's first world championship silver medallist pugilist **Amit Phanghal** won the recognition among male boxers while **Lovlina Borgohain** bagged the award among female boxers.

Indian Mountaineer Bhawna Dehariya Scales Australia's Highest Mountain Peak

- **Indian mountaineer Bhawna Dehariya** has successfully scaled **Mount Kosciuszko** 2,228 meters, the highest mountain peak in **Australia**.
- Ms Dehariya, who last year scaled Mount Everest and Mount Kilimanjaro. She hails from **Madhya Pradesh**.

CFC forward Schembri to retire from professional football

- Chennaiyin FC's Maltese forward **Andre Schembri** announced his retirement from professional football after the Hero Indian Super League final against ATK FC in Goa on March 14.
- The 33-year-old player will be aiming to go out on a high, hopefully by helping CFC win its third ISL title.
- Schembri, a versatile forward, has played club football in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal in his career before arriving in India and Chennaiyin this season.
- It was Schembri who scored CFC's first goal of the 2019-20 season under dramatic circumstances against Hyderabad FC.

Shafali Verma gains top spot in ICC women's T20I rankings

- **Shafali Verma**, the teenage Indian batting sensation, has gained the top spot in the **ICC women's T20 International rankings**, riding on her stellar run at the ongoing World Cup.
- She has become only the second India batter after Mithali Raj to top the women's T20 International rankings, according to an ICC statement. The 16-year-old Shafali has replaced New Zealand's **Suzie Bates**, who had been at the top of batting charts since October 2018.
- During the ongoing ICC Women's T20 World Cup, Shafali has scored 161 runs in four innings demonstrating an explosive batting performance at the top of the order. Another Indian batting star Smriti Mandhana has slipped a couple of places to **sixth rank** in the latest list.
- Among the Indian bowlers, **Poonam Yadav** moved up four places, to eighth rank, after a good run in the ongoing World Cup. In the all-rounders' rankings, India's **Deepti Sharma** has advanced nine places to seventh rank, the first time that she is among the top 10 in the all-rounders' list.

Kieron Pollard becomes first player to play 500 T20 matches

- West Indies skipper **Kieron Pollard** became the first player in the history of **T20 cricket** to feature in **500 matches** when he took the field against Sri Lanka for the first T20I.
- **Dwayne Bravo** is second in the list with 453 matches under his belt so far.
- **Chris Gayle** is at the third spot in the list as he has featured in 404 T20 matches.
- **Pollard** was congratulated by teammates on his landmark day before the start of the T20I and was also presented with a special jersey to mark the occasion. The jersey had the all-rounder's name at the back along with the number 500.

Important Obituaries

Name	Field
Balbir Singh Kullar	Former Indian Hockey Player
Joginder Singh Saini	Athletics coach and Dronacharya awardee
Bulandshahr Virendra Singh Sirohi	Uttar Pradesh MLA
Jack Welch	General Electric Co's former chief executive officer
Potturi Venkateswara Rao	Journalist & Former editor of Telugu Daily 'Andhra Prabha'
Javier Pérez de Cuéllar	Former UN chief and Peruvian Prime Minister
K Anbazhagan	General Secretary, DMK
Hans Raj Bhardwaj	Former Governor, Karnataka
N Vijayan Pillai	Kerala Legislator
Santu Mukhopadhyay	Bengali Actor
Dana Zatopkova (Czech Republic)	Olympic javelin champion

Patil Puttappa	Journalist and former Rajya Sabha member
Puthussery Ramachandran	Malayalam poet, scholar and teacher
Jairam Kulkarni	Marathi actor
Imtiaz Khan	Bollywood actor and theatre personality
Roger Mayweather	Former Boxing trainer and uncle of Floyd
PK Banerjee	Indian Footballer
Kenny Rogers	American singer-songwriter
Lorenzo Sanz	Former Real Madrid President
Visu	Tamil Screen writer, Director & Actor
Nimmi (Nawab Banoo)	Hindi Actress
Abdul Latif	Former India International Footballer
Flyod Cardoz	Chef
Nemai Ghosh	Photographer
Satish Gujral	Artist & Architect (Padma Vibhushan Awardee)
RajyoginiDadiJanki,	Chief administrator of Brahmakumari
Beni Prasad Verma	Former Union Minister
Paravai Muniyamma	Tamil Actress & Folk Singer
Sethuraman	Tamil Actor
Dr. Joseph Lowery	“Dean” of the American Civil Rights Movement, Co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Thomas Schafer	German Finance Minister
Chandan Singh Rathore	Air Vice Marshal and recipient of MahaVir Chakra