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BAZOOKA

MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY-2021 COVERAGE

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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. The Union Education Minister, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' addressed the ASEAN India Hackathon. The **ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon** was inaugurated to further strengthen the India and ASEAN ties.
2. Union Environment Minister, **Prakash Javadekar** along with his French counterpart, Barbara Pompili has launched **Indo-French Year of the Environment** in New Delhi. Indo-French Year of the Environment is the **Indo-French partnership on Environment, Biodiversity, Climate Change** and other allied areas to be undertaken throughout 2021.
3. The Central government has announced that, it will soon set up a new **Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM)** in **Chennai**.
4. The NITI Aayog has recently released its plan for Little Andaman. The plan is named as "**Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island Vision Document**". It has been planned for the sustainable and holistic development of the island in Andaman and Nicobar. The Little Andaman is a 680 sq km fragile Island in the Andaman&Nicobar.
5. Textiles Minister **Smriti Irani** has inaugurated **8th India International Silk Fair** on Virtual Portal. It is **India's biggest silk fair**, being held under one roof on Indian Silk Export Promotion Council.
6. **Microsoft** has launched new **India Development Center (IDC) facility** of Microsoft in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. This centre in NCR is the third development center of Microsoft in India after Bengaluru and Hyderabad. It will serve as a leading hub for driving advanced engineering and innovation.
7. Vice President **M Venkaiah Naidu** has inaugurated **Aadi Mahotsav**, a National Tribal Festival today at Dilli Haat in INA in Delhi. **Aadi Mahotsav - A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Crafts, Cuisine and Commerce** is a successful annual initiative that was commenced in **2017**.
8. **Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM)** has been established at **National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai**
9. Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** inaugurates **13th edition of three-day mega Aero show** event that is taking place for the first time in a hybrid mode (physical + virtual) due to Covid-19 Pandemic. **Aero show 2021** is **Asia's largest defence and aerospace air show**. It is being hosted by **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.
10. Union Agriculture Minister **Narendra Singh Tomar** informed Lok Sabha about **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) organised KRITAGYA- a National level hackathon**. KRITAGYA was introduced in August 2020 to promote innovation in agriculture and allied sectors in the country.
11. PM **Narendra Modi** will inaugurate **Chauri Chaura Centenary Celebrations** at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, on 4th Feb 2021 marking 100 years of 'Chauri Chaura' incident. It took place on 4 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur of United Province (modern Uttar Pradesh) in British India.
12. **Union Budget 2021-22** has proposed setting up of **100 new Sainik Schools in India**, in partnership with NGOs, private schools and State-owned schools.
13. Premier medical institution in Chandigarh, **Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER)** has launched first '**amputee clinic**' in India. '**PGI Amputee Clinic**' has been set up with the aim of improving amputation patient care by providing a collection of services under one roof with significant coordination.

14. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan Lal Kataria has jointly launched unified web portal for monitoring the progress of **GOBARDHAN** activities across the nation. **Gobardhan** is a component of Swachh Bharat Mission Phase-2 for organic solid waste management.
15. The **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** is developing a futuristic high altitude **pseudo satellite** with a start-up company, to strengthen the country's military strike capabilities.
16. **Vaccine Maitri Initiative** is an initiative launched by **India** to gift COVID-19 vaccines to neighbouring countries. Recently, **Sri Lanka and Bahrain** have received the COVID-19 vaccines from India under the initiative. The Vaccine Maitri initiative was launched by India on January 20 to gift COVID-19 vaccines to neighbouring countries.
17. The **Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave** was hosted by India on February 4, 2021. The event took place in the backdrop of Aero India 2021 which is the largest Aero show of Asia. The Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave was organised under the **theme: "Enhanced Peace, Security, and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region"**.
18. Recently, a maiden **contingent of 34 CRPF women personnel** were inducted into the specialized jungle warfare commando force called **CoBRA**. The contingent would now be deployed in the anti-naxal operations grid of India. **Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) COBRA is a special operation unit of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) of India.**
19. The Minister of State for the Electronics and IT, Sanjay Dhotre, highlighted in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha that; more **than 2.9 lakh digital banking cybersecurity incidents** were reported in the year 2020.
20. The National Horticulture Fair will start on February 8, 2021. It is a five-day event that will be organised at the **Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) campus, Bangalore.**

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21. The Ministry of AYUSH (MoA) has formulated the **Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) training programme** recently. The programme was initiated in the backdrop of the ministry's effort to enhance the acceptance and adoption of the practice of Yoga in India as well as abroad.
22. India-US exercise '**Yudh Abhyas**' has commenced in **Bikaner district in Rajasthan**. It is the **16th edition of annual bilateral joint exercise** of both the armies and will be held till 21st February.
23. **India's first geothermal power project** named as **Geothermal Field Development Project** will be established at **Puga village of eastern Ladakh**. A tripartite MoU between **ONGC Energy, LAHDC, Leh and Power Department of UT Ladakh** for establishment and implementation of first phase was signed.
24. PM Narendra Modi has inaugurated **World Sustainable Development Summit 2021** on 10th February. Theme: '**Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all**'. It is the **20th edition of The Energy and Resources Institute's (TERI) flagship event**.
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Ministry of Earth Sciences are key partners of Summit

25. The biennial **Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX 21)** which is the largest wargame of the **Indian Navy** was started in January 2021. The exercise is still underway, and it will end in the third week of February 2021. The exercise is being held in the Indian Ocean Region and its adjunct waters.

26. Union Minister of State for Agriculture, **Kailash Choudhry** has virtually inaugurated **National Horticulture Fair (NHF) 2021** in Bengaluru. It was a **5-day long event**. It aims to showcase cutting edge technologies, crop varieties, pest and disease management practices and processing method, etc. Organized by: **Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR)**. Theme: **‘Horticulture for Start-Up and Stand-Up India’**

27. **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has restricted permissible amount of industrial Trans Fatty Acid in food products to 2%. FSSAI has amended **FSSAI (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations, 2011** to put into effect **Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2021**. It will come into effect from **Jan 1, 2022**

28. PM Narendra Modi will inaugurate 2nd edition of **Maritime India Summit-2021** on 2nd March. The summit will be participated by around 20,000 delegates, 24 partner countries and more than 400 Projects. It will be organized by Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways jointly with FICCI as Industrial Partner and EY as Knowledge Partner.

29. For the first time in history, **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has opened its **UR Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru** for testing satellites developed by private sector. Two satellites, developed by **Indian startups SpaceKidz India and Pixxel (incorporated as Sygyzy)** were tested at UR Rao Satellite Centre.

30. **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** has launched **Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF)** during skill partnership function under **SANKALP**. Fellows under MGNF will acquire academic expertise and technical competency in understanding the overall skill ecosystem along with being attached to District Skill Committees (DSCs). Ministry has partnered with top **9 Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs)** across India for MGNF implementation.

31. **NITI Aayog’s Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** and **Australia’s national science agency (CSIRO)** inaugurated **India-Australia Circular Economy (I-ACE) Hackathon, 2021**, to enable talented innovative students and start-ups from Australia and India to address common national issues through innovative technology solutions. **I-ACE** is supported by **Australian Dept of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER)**, **AIM Atal Incubation Centre network**, and various domain experts.

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32. India’s homegrown app **MapMyIndia** ties up with **ISRO** to build an alternative to **Google Maps**.

33. The Defence Minister of India, **Rajnath Singh**, has launched the **e-Chhawani portal**. With the launch of this portal, the residents of Cantonment areas can now register their complaints with respect to the civic issues.

34. The government has shared data that India has suffered a **huge crop loss on 18.176 million hectares of land**. The crop loss on the 18.176 million hectares land amounts to roughly 8.5 per cent of the total gross cropped area. The crop loss occurred due to floods.
35. The 18th edition of **BioAsia** event will be held in between February 22, 2021 to February 23, 2021. It will be organised under the theme: '**Move the Needle**'. This year, the BioAsia event will focus on Covid-19, pharma, medtech and global health.
36. The Union telecom ministry has decided to set up an **intelligence unit and a consumer protection system**. These systems will be set up in the effort to tackle the threats associated with the pesky calls. It would also help in taking strict action against the financial frauds that happens using telecom resources.
37. **ISRO** and **MapmyIndia** partners to develop alternative App to Google Map. This indigenously-developed alternative app will be known as '**Bhuvan**' to provide mapping and other location-based services. **ISRO's database of satellite images** and **MapmyIndia's digital map platform** will be used to develop new app.
38. Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** has launched an online portal '**e-Chhawani**' and mobile app, to facilitate 'ease of living' and 'ease of doing' for Cantonment Boards residents. **Developed by:** eGov Foundation, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), DG Defence Estates and NIC.
39. In its first mission in 2021, **ISRO** will launch **Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1** and three **Indian payloads by PSLV C-51**.
40. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, **Thaawarchand Gehlot** has virtually released **3rd edition of Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary** with 10,000 terms (including 6,000 earlier terms). **ISL Dictionary** has been brought out by **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)**
41. **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched **Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan** under Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban). It will be conducted in cities to ascertain equitable distribution of water, reuse of wastewater and mapping of water bodies. It will be initially conducted in 10 cities like **Agra, Badlapur, Bhubaneswar, Churu, Kochi, Madurai, Patiala, Rohtak, Surat and Tumkur**
42. An **IIT Madras**-Incubated start-up **Pi Beam** has recently launched **PiMo**, a sustainable utility **e-bike**. The e-Bike can charge faster than a smartphone and its riding does not require a license or registration.
43. The Third **India Tourism Mart** was organised on February 18, 2021. It was addressed by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan. The event was organised by the Federation of Associations in India Tourism and Hospitality (**FAITH**) through video conferencing.
44. The National Highways Authority of India (**NHAI**) has successfully achieved **100 percent cashless toll collection at the National Highway fee plazas** in the entire country. All lanes across the fee plazas on National Highways have been declared as FASTag lanes in effect from February 16, 2021.
45. The **National Informatics Centre** has launched its own instant messaging platform called **Sandes** on the line of **WhatsApp**.

46. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, addressed the **India-Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE)** on February 19, 2021. During the hackathon, Narendra Modi said that there is a need to look at India's consumption patterns. India also needs to look upon how to reduce their ecological impact.

47. Labour Minister **Santosh Gangwar** launched software applications for **five pan-India surveys** including on migrant and domestic workers. These five surveys being undertaken by the **Labour Bureau**.

The Surveys includes All-India Survey on Migrant workers, All-India Survey on Domestic Workers, All-India Survey on Employment Generated by Professionals, All-India Survey on Employment Generated in Transport Sector, and All-India Quarterly Establishment based Employment Survey.

48. PM **Narendra Modi** inaugurated "**Indian Oil's** 143-km-long pipeline from **Ramanathapuram to Thoothukudi**. The project will monetize the gas from ONGC gas fields. This is a part of a larger national gas pipeline project being developed at a cost of **₹4,500 crore**. PM also laid the foundation stone of **Cauvery Basin Refinery at Nagapattinam**.

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

50. PM **Narendra Modi** has addressed **6th Governing Council of NITI Aayog** focusing on the need of policy framework and cooperation between Centre and state. **Meet saw 6 key focus areas:** making India a manufacturing powerhouse, reimagining agriculture, improving physical infrastructure, accelerating HRD, improving service delivery at grassroots level and health and nutrition. It was attended by 26 CM, 3 Lt Governors and 2 Administrators, apart from Union Ministers

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51. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal has announced fourth **Pariksha Pe Charcha 2021**, to be conducted in March 2021.

52. The Union Minister of Road, Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari, had launched the '**Go Electric Campaign**' on February 19, 2021. This campaign was launched in order to spread awareness with respect to the benefits of Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure. The campaign would also raise awareness regarding e-mobility and electric cooking across India.

53. PM Narendra Modi has virtually addressed **29th edition of Nasscom Technology and Leadership Forum (NTLF)**. It is the flagship event of **National Association of Software and Service Companies**. NTLF 2021 theme: '**Shaping the future towards a better normal**'.

54. **CSIR** has signed MoU with **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** to support the development and promotion of health research in India.

55. The **first-ever National Toy Fair** will be starting from the February 27th, 2021. The festival will conclude on March 2, 2021. It will be organized in the virtual format. During the event, the Centre for Creative Learning (CCL), which is based in IIT Gandhinagar, will showcase its 75 toy creations in the fair.

56. The **Indian Coast Guard Ship** (ICG) named as C-453 was commissioned into services in **Chennai** on February 19, 2021. This was the 17th interceptor boats out of the 18 which are being indigenously built by **Larsen & Toubro Ltd.**

57. Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** has virtually inaugurated **Skill Development Centre (SDC)** for **Fire Safety Training** at Pilkhuwa in Uttar Pradesh. SDC is created by **DRDO lab Centre for Fire, Explosive and Environment Safety (CFEES)**

58. **Pune International Centre** and **Ministry of External Affairs** will co-chair **Asia Economic Dialogue 2021**. The dialogue will be addressed by External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** and his counterparts from **Japan, Australia, Maldives, Mauritius** and **Bhutan**.

59. The **IIT Council**, which is the apex decision-making body of IITs has set up **four panels** for autonomy. The panel will look after several issues ranging from funding to graded autonomy in the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

60. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (**DRDO**) has successfully launched the two indigenously designed and developed **Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM)**. The missiles were launched with the help of static vertical launcher. They were launched from **Integrated Test Range, Chandipur** off the Odisha Coast.

61. Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** has inaugurated **26th edition of 'Hunar Haat' in New Delhi**. It will be organized with the theme of **'Vocal for Local'**. More than 600 artisans and craftsmen from more than 31 states and UTs are participating. Hunar Haat is also available online at hunarhaat.org and on **Government e-Marketplace portal** for domestic as well as international customers. **Hunar Haat** is a beautiful exhibition of India's traditional art and craft.

62. **Mumbai** will start the **first undersea tunnel of India** in 2023 which is being constructed as part of **Coastal Road project of Mumbai**. Two tunnels will be built under the Mumbai Coastal Road Project. The tunnel will have the length of 2.07 km out of which 1 kilometre portion will be under the sea.

63. The International Commission on Large Dams (**ICOLD**) Symposium on Sustainable Development of Dams & River Basins was inaugurated by the Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, on February 24, 2021.

- The Symposium on Sustainable Development of Dams & River Basins is being organised by the **International Commission on Large Dams (INCOLD)** in association with the **Dam Rehabilitation Improvement Project (DRIP)**, Central Water Commission (**CWC**) and National Hydrology Project (**NHP**).
- The event will be organized at **New Delhi** as Hybrid event.
- The event will be participated by more than 300 delegates from India and abroad.

64. Indian Coast Guard Ship **C-453** has been commissioned at **Chennai** to join the Coast Guard Eastern fleet. It is the **17th of the 18 Interceptor Boat (IBs) project** indigenously constructed by **Larsen & Toubro Ltd.**

65. **Kushinagar Airport in Uttar Pradesh** has received necessary clearances from aviation regulator **DGCA** to operate international flights. Once operational, **Kushinagar airport** will become **third functional international facility in UP**.

66. The ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways informed that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the second edition of the **Maritime India Summit (MIS)** in the virtual mode on March 2, 2021. Apart from that, the ministry has already started signing several Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with various entities.

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67. The Union Government has announced that the **second phase of COVID-19 vaccination** will begin from **March 1, 2021**.

68. The Central government has notified the new guidelines on social media regulations on February 25, 2021. It is being called as “**Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021**”. The new guidelines have been notified with the aim of regulating social media and OTT platforms.

69. The task force on **Interlinking of Rivers** has approved the **Mahanadi-Godavari Link** on February 25, 2021. Approval was given to the preparation of final detailed project report on proposed Mahanadi -Godavari link. The linking project was approved by ensuring the utilisation of allocated Godavari waters by the states of **Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**.

70. The **Ministry of consumer affairs** had decided to integrate the **Common Service Centres (CSCs)** with the **E-Daakhil portal** to facilitate the consumers for e-filing. The e-Daakhil Consumer grievance redressal portal was launched on September 7, 2020 by the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission. It has been developed and is maintained by **National Information Centre (NIC)** under **MeitY**. It is now operational in 15 States and UTs. It has provision of online payment of fees from anywhere.

71. The Union education minister, addressed the **16th FICCI Higher Education Summit** on February 25, 2021. The summit is being organised in **New Delhi** from February 25, 2021 to February 27, 2021. While addressing the summit the minister said it will make India the knowledge capital of the world.

72. Chief Justice of India S. A. Bobde on February 27, 2021 called for reducing dependence on courts by encouraging parties to opt for pre-litigation mediation which has a way of solving problems, both civil and criminal, which arise from similar dispute. He also inaugurated a new Centenary Building of Patna High Court.

73. The **India Toy Fair-2021** is being held from February 27 to March 2 in a virtual mode. During the inaugural ceremony, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed the toy manufacturers to build toys that are better both for “**ecology and psychology**.” The toy fair is divided into **five stages — pre-school to Class II, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary**.

74. The **NITI Aayog and Invest India** have associated with the **National Bamboo Mission** to conduct the National Conference on Opportunities and Challenges for Bamboo in India. The National Conference on Opportunities will be organized with the aim to discuss on the bamboo ecosystem in order to promote holistic growth of the sector across the entire value chain system.

- The discussion by experts and stakeholders from several fields will further accelerate the efforts of National Bamboo Mission in order to bring about solutions regarding the issues that sector is facing.
- Conference was inaugurated by Union Minister of MSME, Nitin Gadkari, on February 25, 2021.

75. The countdown for the launch of Indian Space Research Organisation’s **PSLV-C 51 or Amazonia-1** mission started on February 27, 2021. The countdown began 8:54 am. PSLV-C51 is scheduled to be launched from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh**.

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76. The Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, **Narendra Singh Tomar**, has inaugurated the **Saras Aajeevika Mela 2021** on February 26, 2021 at **Noida Haat**.

77. Science and Technology Minister **Harsh Vardhan** will virtually inaugurate **2nd edition of Global Bio-India**. It will be organized from **1st to 3rd March**

- It will showcase strength of India's biotechnology sector at national level and global community
- Theme: **Transforming lives and tag line Biosciences to Bioeconomy**
- It is being co-organised by **Dept of Biotechnology, Ministry of S&T, PSU, BIRAC, CII, Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises and Invest India**.

78. Railways Minister **Piyush Goyal** has inaugurated **6th edition of International Conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector**

- Theme of India Pharma 2021 is : **Indian Pharma Industry: Future is Now**
- Theme of India Medical Device 2021: **India MedTech Future: Innovate & Make in India through Global Alliance**
- It is organized by **Dept of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, FICCI**

79. **Union Health Minister** has virtually addressed **Global Indian Physicians Congress**, organized by **Global Association for Physicians of Indian Origin (GAPIO)**

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80. The Chief Minister of **Punjab**, Captain Amarinder Singh, has launched the **'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai'** mission virtually. This mission is the part of the government's campaign to complete the goal of **100 per cent potable piped water supply** in all rural households by March 2022.

81. The chief minister of **Maharashtra** has launched a scheme to **boost the start-up ecosystem** in Maharashtra. Apart from that, the government has also proposed to set up an international standard Center for the Skill Development in Mumbai. Further, to boost the skill development courses in ITIs are also being updated in a timely manner.

82. **Uttarakhand** sets up first of its kind botanical garden named as **'Shivalik Arboretum'** in Nainital for conserving over 210 species of trees found in Shivalik range of Himalayas.

83. **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** has become first Union territory/region to become **Covid-19 free in India** with active cases falling to zero.

84. The health department in **Madhya Pradesh** has launched the **Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS)** campaign with the aim of reducing infant mortality due to pneumonia. The state government has also developed training modules in partnership with PGIMER, Chandigarh, and UNICEF.

85. **Karnataka Government** signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 34 Aerospace and defence firms with an investment prospect of 2464 crore rupees.

86. In **Jharkhand**, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) wing of the Government of India will cooperate in **setting up industries up to 20 crore rupees** in Dhanbad. The central government will give 70% amount, while the remaining 30% is to be borne by the state government and industrialists.

87. **Kerala** will open its **first Human Milk Bank (HMB)** on February 5, 2021. This is a state-of-the-art facility, and Kerala Health Minister KK Shailaja will open at **Ernakulam General Hospital**. A milk bank was established with the support of the **Rotary Club of Cochin Global**.

88. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has approved the creation of the fifth tiger reserve in **Tamil Nadu**. The tiger reserve will surround the **Meghamalai** and the Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuaries within it.

89. The Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal launched the **'Switch Delhi' campaign** on February 4, 2021. The campaign was launched to **promote the use of electric vehicles**.

90. The third phase of **Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar** mela was held in **Guwahati** on February 6, 2021. The event was attended by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The **Assam** government will be distributing the financial assistance of 3 thousand rupees to each of 7.5 lakh people who belongs to tea sector.

91. India's first **thunderstorm research testbed** will be established in **Balasore, Odisha**. The Thunderstorm Research Testbed is being established with the objective to minimize the human fatalities and loss of property because of the lightning strikes.

92. Recently, the **Villupuram** district administration in **Tamil Nadu** has issued the first declaration under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**. The declaration was issued in a bid to declare **Kaliveli wetlands as a bird sanctuary**.

93. **Andhra Pradesh** has become the **second State to implement the power sector reforms** that was put forward by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. The state has implemented the one of the three reforms that was bought in 2020.

94. The Central Government has confirmed in a written reply to Lok Sabha about the presence of **1600 tonnes of lithium deposits in Mandya** district of **Karnataka**. However, the significance and the quantity of the lithium in the region can only be confirmed after exploring the entire area.

95. **Uttar Pradesh government** has introduced a system of issuing a unique **16-digit Unicode** on February 7, 2020. This Unicode will be used to mark all kinds of landholdings in the state. The Unicode numbers for the land would comprise of the 16 digits.

96. PM Narendra Modi has laid the **Foundation Stone of two hospitals at Biswanath and Charaideo** and launched 'Asom Mala' at Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur District, Assam. **Asom Mala:** Programme for state highways and major district roads. It is launched in line with 'Bharat Mala Project'.

97. **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** has announced to set up first '**Thunderstorm Research Testbed**' of India at Odisha's Balasore district.

98. **Vijayanagara** has been declared as the **31st district of Karnataka** through an official gazette notification.

99. The office of the Karnataka Digital Economy Mission (KDEM) was inaugurated in Karnataka. The office was inaugurated with the objective of **increasing the digital economy contribution to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) by 30 per cent**. Along with the office, the "Beyond Bengaluru" report was also published.

100. **Maharashtra Small Industries Development Corporation** and **Maharashtra State Khadi & Village Industries Board** have signed MoU with **Flipkart** to promote wooden toys, local artifacts, handicrafts.

101. The state of **Madhya Pradesh** has launched a **Police Museum** at the police headquarters in **Bhind**, Madhya Pradesh. It is a unique museum themed on the dacoits to showcase their stories. The museum contains several unique items that were used by dacoits namely Phoolan Devi and Nirbhay Gujjar.

102. **Govt of India, Govt of Chhattisgarh** has signed an agreement worth **\$100 million** with **World Bank** for project **CHIRAAG (Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth)**. **CHIRAAG Project** will develop sustainable production systems in Chhattisgarh, that will allow tribal households in remote areas to produce diversified and nutritious food, round-the-year.

103. Famous '**Mandu Festival**' inaugurated at the historic town of Mandu in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh and will culminate on **February 15, 2021**.

104. **Kerala**, which is home to India's biggest art event called Kochi-Muziris Biennale, is now aspiring to become a museum hub in the country by **setting up mini-museums**

105. The Chief Minister of **Kerala**, Pinarayi Vijayan, has inaugurated the first route and terminal buildings of **Kochi Water Metro**. This project connects the islands across the city with the help of state-of-the-art boats. The metro route ranges from Vyttila to Kakkanad.

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106. **UP Govt** has started training programme for aspirants of various competitive examinations under '**Abhyudaya Yojana**'. Under this, free of cost training will be provided to the candidates who are preparing for various competitive examinations like **UPSC, UPPCS, Subordinate Services, Banking Services, NEET, NDA, CDS TET exam**, etc.

107. PM Narendra Modi launched the **Mahabahu-Brahmaputra** initiative in Assam. It aims to improve connectivity in the eastern states. Under which Ro-Pax vessel operations between **Neamati-Majuli Island, North Guwahati-South Guwahati** and **Dhubri Hatsingimari** inaugurated.

108. A team of scientists and photographers in Kerala have launched ‘Snakepedia’ mobile app to help treat snake bites. It will have all relevant information on snakes to help the public as well as doctors in treating snake bites.
109. Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has announced two new grants, during the Budget session of the state.
- **Chief Minister's Grant for Journalism:** Support the strengthening of democracy, impacting good governance
 - **Chief Minister's Research Grant:** Support advancement of science and extend funding to research and research scholars.
110. Union Minister, Prakash Javadekar has inaugurated Atal Paryavaran Bhavan at Lakshadweep during his 4-day official visit. **Atal Paryavaran Bhavan:** Lakshadweep forest department's headquarters.
111. PM Narendra Modi has virtually inaugurated key projects of **power and urban sector** in Kerala.
112. Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal has laid the foundation stone of the **first skill university of eastern India in Darrang district, Assam.**
113. Chandigarh became **1st state or Union Territory** in India to launch **Carbon Watch mobile app** providing carbon footprint of an individual. It can be accessed by everyone, but has specific options for residents of Chandigarh.
114. Assam govt has increased the wages of tea garden workers by Rs 50 from **Rs 167** to **Rs 217** per day.
115. The state of **Uttar Pradesh** has become the first Indian State that has tabled the **paperless budget.**
116. **Uttar Pradesh govt** has presented biggest ever budget of the state, having total outlay of **Rs 5,50,270 crores.**
117. **Seven-day long exhibition of National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub (NSSH) scheme** has been concluded in UT of **Jammu and Kashmir.** Govt has taken slew of measures to ensure the upliftment SC and ST communities and awareness camps and exhibitions are organised on regular basis .
118. The Chief Minister of **Madhya Pradesh**, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, has announced to rename the **Hoshangabad** city of MP as **Narmadapuram.**
119. The **Uttarakhand** government has put forward an ordinance providing the **co-ownership rights to women** in the ancestral property of their husband.
120. The state of **Uttar Pradesh** is all set to export a consignment of 20 tonnes of **Kala Namak rice to Singapore.** This move is a major boost to the farm exports from the state.
121. The government of **Kerala** has sanctioned ₹9 crore for the conversion of conventional anganwadis into “**smart**” **anganwadis** with better amenities. Smart Anganwadi Scheme Under this scheme, the Department of Women and Child Development has granted 48 anganwadis of the states to construct its new buildings.
122. The Horticulture Department of **Karnataka** will set up a **flower processing centre** in collaboration with the **International Flower Auction Bangalore (IFAB).** The centre will be set up in order to convert the unsold flowers into its useful products.

123. The chief minister of **Rajasthan**, Ashok Gehlot, have announced a **Universal Health Coverage** for the state while presenting the state budget of state for 2021-22 on February 24, 2021.
124. The Chief Minister of **Karnataka**, B.S. Yediyurappa, launched the ‘**Namma Cargo**’ services on February 26, 2021. Namma Cargo Services was launched at the Vidhana Soudha. At this place, the State road transport corporations will transport the parcels so as to generate more revenue, except for the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC).
125. **Madhya Pradesh** Cabinet has approved the “**Penal Law (Madhya Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2021**” on February 26, 2021. This bill was approved in order to give **life imprisonment to food adulterers in states**.
126. **Madhya Pradesh** Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has announced the renaming of **Hoshangabad city as Narmadapuram**. This was announced during **Narmada Jayanti programme** held in Hoshangabad.
127. **Kerala’s** Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has recently inaugurated **first Digital University of India at Mangalapuram, Kerala**.
- It is named as **Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology** (Digital University)
 - It has been established by upgrading **Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management Kerala (IIITM-K)**
 - It has been set up with a vision of creating a futuristic institution of higher learning in Digital technologies and its management

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

128. The **SpaceX** of Elon Musk has recently announced to launch its **first all civilian mission to the space**. The SpaceX is planning for the launch of Inspiration4 on Falcon 9. This would be the first all-commercial astronaut mission in the world.
129. Facebook Inc. has appointed **Henry Moniz** as its first-ever **Chief Compliance Officer**.
130. State Counsellor **Aung San Suu Kyi** along with President **Win Myint** and other members of ruling party has been detained in **Myanmar’s military coup**.
131. Indian-American **Bhavya Lal** has been appointed as **Acting Chief of Staff of US space agency National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**. She will also serve as the senior advisor for budget and finance at NASA.
132. United States-based **Ford Motor Co** has partnered with **Alphabet Inc’s Google** to cooperate in software, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing, developing new consumer services.

133. Amazon Inc founder and CEO, **Jeff Bezos** has announced that he will step down as CEO of the company and become Executive Chairman with effect from July 01, 2021. He will be succeeded by **Andy Jassy**, who is currently serving as the chief executive of Amazon Web Services (AWS).

134. The 16th edition of **Indo-US joint** military exercise '**Yudh Abhyas**' will begin in **Rajasthan** from February 8 and it will be concluded in February 21, 2021. About Yudh Abhyas 2021 The exercise will be held **near the India-Pakistan border**.

135. Recently, the launch vehicle **Stardust 1.0** was launched from a former military base in US called Loring Commerce Centre. The launch of the vehicle is significant in the light that this is the **1st commercial space launch that is powered by biofuel**.

136. **Pakistan** successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile called **Ghaznavi**.

137. **Denmark Govt** has approved a project to build the **world's first energy island**, in the North Sea. It will produce and store enough **green energy** to meet the electricity needs of three million households in European countries.

138. The first **India-Bahrain Joint Working Group** meeting in the field of **Renewable Energy** was held in a virtual format on February 04, 2021, for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy. The Indian delegation was led by **Dinesh Dayanand Jagdale**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy. **Abdul Hussain bin Ali Mirza**, President of Sustainable Energy Authority led the Bahraini delegation.

139. **South Korea** has approved a plan to build **World's largest wind power plant by 2030**.

140. **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** has selected **SpaceX** to launch its **SPHEREx Mission**. SPHEREx: Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization, and Ices Explorer.

141. **United Arab Emirates' (UAE)** first mission to Mars, **Hope Probe** has successfully entered the orbit around the red planet.

142. Former European Central Bank Chief **Mario Draghi** has been sworn in as the new **Prime Minister of Italy**.

143. The Prime Minister of Italy, Mario Draghi, has put the climate change at the centre of his plans to run Italy. He has created a **super ministry** to ensure a transition to green energy drives recovery in the country.

144. A Chinese spacecraft named **Tianwen-1** has successfully entered the **orbit around Mars** on February 10, 2021. This mission is China's first independent mission on the red planet

145. The **Nigerian** economist **Ngozi Okonjo Iweala** has been appointed as the head the **World Trade Organization**. She has become the **first woman** to take this position. She has also become the first African to hold this charge amid rising protectionism. Okonjo-Iweala was named as the director-general by the representatives of the **164 member countries**.

146. Indian-origin **Preeti Sinha** has been appointed as the **Executive Secretary of UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)**.

147. **India** has joined the "**Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021**" which is a two-day naval exercise. The exercise is being held in the northern part of the Indian Ocean. The drill was participated by the forces and vessels from navy divisions of both the Iranian army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

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148. China overtook **United States (US)** as the **biggest trading partner of European Union (EU) in 2020**, according to the data by European Union statistics agency, Eurostat. Britain was 3rd-largest trading partner, behind China and US, before leaving European Union in 2020. Trade volume of EU with China reached **586 billion euros (\$711 billion) in 2020**, compared to **555 billion euros (\$673 billion)** for US. EU exports to China rose by **2.2%** while imports from China increased by **5.6%**.

149. India is all set to host the virtual health secretary-level meeting with the member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (**SAARC**). The virtual meeting will be held on February 18, 2021. During the meeting the members will discuss the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Pakistan has also been invited to attend the meeting.

150. India – Singapore CEO Forum, that was launched in November 2018, again held their meeting. The meeting was organized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**) and FICCI on February 18, 2021.

151.The **science rover Perseverance** of NASA landed on the **Red Planet (MARS)** on February 18, 2021. This rover is the most advanced astrobiology laboratory that has been ever sent another planet. It will firstly search the traces of ancient microbial life on the Planet.

152.The International Solar Alliance (**ISA**) have planned to launch the **World Solar Bank (WSB)** at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow that is scheduled for November 2021. The development of the World Solar Bank will support India's attempt to secure its leadership in the climate arena.

153.The Secretary-General of United Nations, Antonio Guterres, has asked the G20 nations to prepare a "Global Covid-19 Vaccination Plan" on February 17, 2020.

154. The lower house of **French** parliament has approved **Ant-Radicalism bill** in a bid to fight the **Islamic radicalism**.

155. Union Cabinet has approved signing of **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius**. It is the first trade agreement to be signed by India with an African country. **Aim:** Liberalising norms to boost two-way commerce between the two countries. It will cover **Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, TBT, Dispute Settlement**

156. India has signed MoU with **Nepal's Central Level Project Implementation Unit (Education)** for reconstruction of 6 secondary schools.

157. United States (US) has officially rejoined **Paris Agreement** under Presidency of US President Joe Biden.

158. India signed 5 deals with **Maldives** to boost infrastructure in island nation:

- *Remodel an older EXIM Bank of India Line of Credit of USD 25 million for Road Development*
- *Letter of Intent for financing housing project*
- *Fish processing plant in Maldives*

- *Capacity building and exchange of content and expertise between Prasar Bharati and Maldives Media*
- *Sustainable urban development*

159. **India & Ethiopia** signed agreements on Visa Facilitation and **Leather Technology**.

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

161. The **Indian and the Indonesian** navies held the **PASSEX military exercise** in the **Arabian** sea on February 18, 2021. This military exercise was organised in order to enhance the operational interoperability and the overall cooperation. INS Talwar represented the Indian naval ship. The Indonesian Navy was represented by the multirole corvette KRI Bung Tomo.

162. The **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)** and the **Greenstat Norway** signed an agreement to set up the **Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen**. This agreement was signed some days after India unveiled its national hydrogen mission.

163. The 11th **India-European Union macroeconomic dialogue** was held in the virtual mode on February 19, 2021. The Indian Delegation was led by the Secretary of Economic Affairs, Tarun Bajaj. Director-General of Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission led the European Union delegation.

164. **Eleventh India-EU Macroeconomic dialogue** was held through video conferencing.

- It was led by Indian Secretary Economic Affairs **Tarun Bajaj** and Director General of ECFIN in European Commission **Maarten Verwey**
- The dialogue covered sharing of their experiences to enable both sides on various aspects including collaboration in **G20 on finance track matters**
- India-EU relationship covers all dimensions-political, economic, security, trade and investment, environment, research

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165. **NASA** has launched **Northrop Grumman-built Cygnus cargo ship**, a space supply ship, from **Virginia** to carry vital supplies for astronauts on **International Space Station (ISS)**

- Ship is named as **S.S. Katherine Johnson** in honour of Katherine Johnson, a Black NASA mathematician, who played critical role in the success of the first U.S. crewed spaceflight, Mercury-Atlas 6 Mission.
- Launch coincided with **59th anniversary of America's first orbit around Earth (1962)**

166. The United States space agency, **NASA**, released the first **audio from Mars**. It was a faint crackling recording of the wind that was captured by Perseverance rover. NASA has also released the first video of landing of the rover.

167. **India and Mauritius** have signed a **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)**. This was **first ever trade agreement with any African country**. It was signed in the presence of Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Jugnauth and the external affairs minister of India, S Jaishankar.

168. **Japan** has appointed the first ever **Minister for Loneliness** amid the increasing suicide rates in Japan. Suicide rates in Japan has increased for the first time in 11 years in the current COVID-19 pandemic situation.
169. The parliament of **Australia** has passed the landmark legislation called the “**News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code**” on February 25, 2021. This legislation **mandates the global digital platforms to pay** for publishing the Australian news content on their respective platforms. The legislation mainly targets Facebook and Google.
170. The World Trade Organisation (**WTO**) is under pressure to consider the India’s proposal of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on Covid-19 vaccines. Pressure increased on WTO after several European Union lawmakers and group of least developed countries (LDC) provided their support to India’s proposal of waiving the TRIPS on vaccines.
171. **India** has started its **BRICS** Chairship with the inaugural three-day-long Sherpas’ meeting on February 25, 2021. The spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Anurag Srivastava stated that the Secretary (CPV & OIA) chaired the meeting and highlighted the themes, priorities, and calendar for the BRICS 2021. Earlier, the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had launched India’s BRICS 2021 website at Secretariat of BRICS at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan.
172. **India and Ireland** held the bilateral **consultations on UN Security Council** issues on February 26, 2021 in the virtual mode. During the bilateral consultations, both the countries congratulated each other for their election to United Nation Security Council (UNSC). They also held discussions and briefed each regarding the UNSC priorities.
173. The Global anti-terrorism watchdog **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** decided to maintain **Pakistan into Grey List** till June 2021 on February 25, 2021. This decision by the FATF was taken in the light of country’s failure to fully comply with the 27-point action plan of to combat the terrorism.
174. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has announced the appointment of **Ligia Noronha of India as Assistant Secretary-General** and Head of the **New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme**. Noronha is an economist and has worked since 2014 as Director of UNEP’s Economy Division based in Nairobi, leading UNEP’s work on climate mitigation and energy transitions on inclusive green economies, sustainable consumption and production as well as on trade and sustainable finance.
175. The Finance Minister of India, **Nirmala Sitharaman**, attended the **G20 Central Bank Governors’** meeting on February 26, 2021. This was the first ever G20 Central Bank Governors’ meeting that was held under the **Italian Presidency**.
176. **India, France, and Australia** held **trilateral dialogue** at the senior officials’ level, with focus on further enhancing cooperation in Indo-Pacific.
- First **India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue** was held virtually on **September 9, 2020**.
177. The new **Passenger train service** between India and Bangladesh will start on the **26th of March 2021** (Independence Day of Bangladesh).
- The **Haldibari-Chilahati** (in Bangladesh) **train route** was opened after a gap of **55 years** for goods trains on the **17th of December** last year.

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REPORTS & INDICES

178. UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) depicted year **2020 as ‘worst year on record’** due to highest loss in global tourism due to COVID19. It has been emphasized in latest global travel and tourism report named as **‘World Tourism Barometer’**. International arrivals in 2020 dropped by **-74%**. In 2020, overall destinations worldwide welcomed 1 billion fewer international arrivals compared to 2019.

179.According to The **Economist Intelligence Unit(EIU)**, **India** slipped two places to **53rd position** in the **2020 Democracy Index’s** global ranking. India has been classified as a **‘flawed democracy’**.

The EIU report uses **five criteria** - electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. A total of 167 countries are ranked.

- **Norway** - 1st
- **Iceland**-2nd
- **Sweden**-3rd
- **New Zealand** - 4th
- **Canada** - 5th

180.The **Business Confidence Index (BCI)** was recently published by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). The index has rose 29.6 per cent between second and third quarter of the financial year 2020-2021. It has rose in the backdrop of the COVID-19 vaccination drive in several countries including India.

181.The World Bank recently published its report titled **“Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society”**. This report was released by Union transport minister, Nitin Gadkari, on February 13, 2021. The report mentions the disproportionate impact of a road crash on poor households. It also throws light on the links between poverty, road crashes, inequality and vulnerable road users across India.

- The report highlights that, India has only **1 per cent of the world’s vehicles**. but it **accounts for 11 per cent of the global death** due to road accidents. It stands highest death toll in the world because of road accident.
- The world bank report highlighted that the road crash deaths among rural poor households accounts for 44 per cent. While, the road crash death among urban poor households accounts for 11.6 per cent.
- The report further highlights that, the low-income household spends seven months of its income on post-road crash care.
- It also states, a high-income household spends less than a month’s salary on the post-road crash care.
- Report reveals that, the socio-economic burden of road crashes is disproportionately borne by poor households.

182.World Bank in association with **SaveLife Foundation** has prepared report titled as **‘Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society’** based on 2019 incidents

- Report was released by Union transport minister, **Nitin Gadkari**.
- As per the report, **India has only 1% of world’s total vehicles but accounts for 11% of the global death due to road accidents**
- This is the highest death rate due to road accident in world
- 70% of the fatalities belongs to 18-45 years

183. The **Institute of International Finance (IIF)** has reported that, the world has never been more indebted before and the debt will further rise in the year 2021 with more borrowing ahead amid the covid-19 led economic crisis. As per the IIF, governments, companies and households have raised \$24 trillion in 2020

184. The United Nations World Food Programmes (**WFP**) has released its report titled “**The State of School Feeding Worldwide on February 24, 2021.**”

- As per the report, the COVID-19 pandemic risks have reversed the efforts that were made worldwide in a decade to provide nutritious food to the most vulnerable children.
- The report highlights that, one in two school children that would count as around 388 million children worldwide received the school meals when the pandemic was at its peak. This accounts for the highest number in history.
- When the pandemic was at its peak around April 2020, 199 countries had closed their schools. Because of which, 370 million children were suddenly deprived of nutritious meal of the day.
- The report highlighted that, the lockdown threw spotlight on the critical role that school plays in feeding vulnerable children and protecting their futures.

185. The Centre for Science and Environment (**CSE**) has released its **State of Environment Report, 2021** on February 25, 2021. The report highlighted how the Covid-19 pandemic will impact the children across world.

- The report highlighted that the pandemic will impact the 375 million children across the world. The report highlighted that the pandemic will impact the 375 million children across the world.
- Children including from newborns to 14-year-olds will suffer long-lasting impacts.
- These children will be vulnerable to being underweight, stunting and increased child mortality.
- Their education and work productivity will also be impacted.
- As per the report, pandemic has forced over 500 million children out of school globally. Out of the total children, India accounted for more than half.
- The report further highlighted that; 115 million additional people might get pushed into extreme poverty due to pandemic. Most of the poorer people live in South Asia.
- As far as sustainable development is concerned, India ranked 117 among 192 nations.

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GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

186. The Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced during the Union Budget 2021 presentation that the Government has proposed a “**Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) scheme**”. The scheme will enable the textile industry to become globally competitive. It will help the industries to attract large investments and boost employment generation besides boosting the exports.

187. A **domestic manufacturing programme for critical power and renewable energy equipment** will be launched by the ministry of Power in the Financial Year 2021. The programme has at an outlay of Rs 1,500 crore.

188. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has informed to the parliament that the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** which is central government’s maternity benefit scheme has crossed **1.75 crore eligible women** till the financial year 2020.

189. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (**MOHUA**) and **Zomato** have signed a MoU under the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNidhi (**PM SVANidhi**) Scheme. Under the MoU, it was decided to onboard the street food vendors on the food-tech platform of Zomato.

190. In the Union Budget 2021, **Rs. 1050 crore** budget has been allocated for **Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)** for the financial year 2021-2022. The SMAM scheme was launched in the year 2014-15. The scheme was launched by the government of India with the aim of 'reaching the unreached'.

191. The second phase of **Vigyan Jyoti programme** was started on February 11, 2021. It was started on the occasion of **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**. The Vigyan Jyoti Programme will spread the programme to encourage the girls to take interest in science.

192. The Union Textile Minister, Smriti Irani, has launched the commercial Jute seed distribution scheme on February 15, 2021. **Commercial Jute Seed Distribution Scheme** was launched in the backdrop of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the **Jute Corporation of India and the National Seeds Corporation**.

193. The National e-governance plan in agriculture (**NeGPA**) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. The scheme was initially launched in the year 2010-11 in 7 States. Recently, this scheme was extended up to March 31, 2021. The scheme was launched with the aim of achieving the rapid development in India by using Information & Communication.

194. **Govt of India** has launched the **PLI scheme** for telecommunications and networking products, with an outlay of **Rs 12,195 cr over 5 yrs.**

- The scheme will be operational from **1st April 2021**.
- Under the scheme, **Telecom manufacturing** will be boosted in order to enhance the production of more than **Rs 2.4 lakh cr.**
- The scheme also has higher proposed incentives for MSMEs.
- The PLI scheme was launched in **March 2020** in a bid to boost domestic **manufacturing**.

195. The Union Health Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has launched the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0.

- The mission will be conducted in two rounds.
- The first round will start from February 22, 2021 while the second phase will start from March 22, 2021.
- It will run **across 250 districts** or urban areas across the **29 States or Union Territories**.
- Apart from that, the Minister also launched the IMI 3.0 portal and released Operational Guidelines for it.
- He also launched the awareness material or IEC package developed under the campaign

196. The chairman of National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), Bhagwan Lal Sahni, said that the NCBC is in favour of four subcategories of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This move complies with the recommendation of the Justice Rohini Commission.

- **Justice Rohini Commission** was constituted on October 2, 2017. This commission has been appointed in order to study and report about the sub-categorisation of OBCs. The commission will be submitting the report by **July 2021**.
- The panel's terms of reference are to study the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among castes or communities. The panel will also work out on the mechanism, criteria and parameters for sub-categorisation within the OBCs.

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197. The agriculture ministry was allowed to **use drones** for the purpose of remote sensing data collection under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (**PMFBY**). The conditional permission was granted to use the **Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS)** by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

198. The Central government has launched the '**National Urban Digital Mission**' on February 23, 2021. The National Urban Digital Mission was launched by the Union Housing & Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri and Minister of Electronics & IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad.

- While launching the mission, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry (MoHUA) stated that, this mission will institutionalize the citizen-centric and ecosystem-driven approach for the urban governance and service delivery in cities by the year 2022. It will also be providing these service deliveries in all cities and towns by 2024.
- *Initiatives like Smart-Code, India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX), Smart Cities 2.0 website, and Geospatial Management Information System (GMIS) were also launched at this virtual event.*
- "**India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX)**" initiative has been developed by the **Smart Cities Mission** in partnership with the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru**.

199. The National Institution for Transforming India (**NITI Aayog**) recently published its **draft national policy on migrant labours**. The policy was prepared in association with the working subgroup of officials and members of civil society. This draft policy is inspired by the rights-based approach which gain momentum during the return migration.

200. The flagship scheme of the central government, **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN)** has completed its two years on February 24, 2021. The PM-KISAN Scheme was formally launched by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on February 24, 2019. The scheme was launched at Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.

201. The Union Cabinet has approved the production-linked Incentive scheme for **IT Hardware** on February 24, 2021.

- The PLI scheme proposes an incentive to boost the domestic manufacturing.
- It also proposes to attract large investments in value chain of IT Hardware.
- The proposed scheme includes the target segments like tablets, laptops, all-in-one PCs and servers.
- Total cost of the proposed scheme is around **Rs.7,350 crore for 4 years**.
- The budget includes an incentive outlay of Rs.7,325 crore besides the administrative charges of Rs 25 crore.
- Under the scheme, a total production of worth Rs 3,26,00 crore will be achieved out of which 75 per cent will be achieved through the exports.
- This scheme has a potential to generate direct and indirect employment of over 1,80,000 in over 4 years.
- It will provide also provide impetus to Domestic Value Addition for IT Hardware for which there is an expectation that it will rise to 20% – 25% by 2025.

202. Union Cabinet has also approved **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Pharmaceuticals** from 2020-21 to 2028-29

- It will benefit domestic manufacturers and is expected to provide wide range of affordable medicines for consumers.

- Under this, total incremental sales of Rs 2,94,000 crore and total incremental exports of Rs 1,96,000 crore are estimated from 2022-23 to 2027-28.
- It is also expected to **generate employment** for both skilled and unskilled personnel.

203. Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (Ministry of Jal Shakti) has announced the selection of **12 iconic sites** under **Phase IV** of Swachh Iconic Places.

- These sites include **Ajanta Caves** (Maharashtra), **Sanchi Stupa** (Madhya Pradesh), **Kumbhalgarh Fort**, Jaisalmer Fort & **Ramdevra** (Rajasthan), **Golconda Fort** (Telangana) and **Konark Sun Temple** (Odisha).
- Rock Garden, Dal Lake, **Banke Bihari Temple** (Mathura), **Agra Fort** (Uttar Pradesh) and **Kalighat Temple** (West Bengal).

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ECONOMY & BUSINESS

204. The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced an **Agricultural Infrastructure And Development Cess (AIDC)** on some goods while presenting Union Budget 2021. AIDC was announced to provide support to those sector that has been one bright spot amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

205. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted, while presenting the union budget for 2021-2022, that the **fiscal deficit** for the financial year 2021-22 is estimated as **6.8 percent** of the gross domestic product (GDP). The finance minister highlighted that the fiscal deficit is estimated to increase up to **9.5% in the Financial Year 2020-21**.

206. The **commerce ministry** is organising the **Udyog Manthan**. Under the Udyog Manthan, a series of webinars are being conducted. The Webinar is focusing on about **45 sectors** including the pharma sector and electronics sector. The webinar under the Udyog Manthan is being organised with the focus on quality and productivity.

207. The ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) has amended definition of the small companies by amending the Companies Rules. The new amendment allows the **non-resident Indians (NRIs) to incorporate one person companies (OPCs) in India**. The changes were announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the presentation of Union budget.

208. In the last bi-monthly monetary policy meet for the current, the **Reserve Bank of India** projected India's GDP growth rate at **10.5 per cent** for the fiscal year **2021-22**. The growth outlook has improved significantly, and the vaccination drive will further boost the economic rebound.

The apex bank expects the Indian economy to grow in the range of 8.3 per cent to 26.2 per cent in the first half of FY22, followed by a 6 per cent growth in Q3FY22. The central bank's projection is lower than that of the Economic Survey that projected India to grow at a rate of 11 per cent in the coming fiscal.

209. Recently, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (**DIPAM**) stated that a panel of Ministers would take final decision regarding the number of public sector companies that will be retained in each of the strategic sectors. The panel of ministers will comprise of Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister and Nitin Gadkari, the Road Transport.

210. The California-based global digital payment platform **PayPal** has announced that the company has decided to **wind down** its domestic payment services in India with effect from **April 01, 2021**. The decision has been taken because **the company wants to shift its focus on cross-border payments business**.

211. **Reliance Industries** Ltd has received the world's first consignment of '**carbon-neutral oil**' from **Oxy Low Carbon Ventures (OLCV)**, a division of **United State oil major Occidental**.

212. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) will launch the data analytics-driven MCA21 Version 3.0 by October 2021 in the financial year 2021-22. The **MCA21 Version 3.0** system is the Mission Mode e-Governance project of India. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs highlights that the project will comprise of the additional modules for **e-Adjudication, e-Consultation, and Compliance Management**.

213. The Rating agency **Moody's** have recently forecasted that the **nominal** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India will rise closer to **17% in the Financial Year 2021**.

214. **State Bank of India's Economic Research Department** has revised **India's FY21 GDP estimates to (-) 7.0%**. Prior to this, SBI had estimated FY21 GDP at -7.4%.

215. The **Tata Electronics** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Tamil Nadu** government in order to establish a facility to manufacture the mobile components.

216. **ACC Ready Mix Concrete** has recently introduced its new low carbon range of concrete called **ECOPact**. It is a "Green Concrete" that has been introduced for a high-performing, sustainable and circular construction. ECOPact was launched in Mumbai and Hyderabad in the first phase.

217. The **Tata Electronics** has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the Tamil Nadu government in order to establish a facility to manufacture the mobile components.

The project by the Tata Electronics will cost Rs 4684 crores. It will be established in **Krishnagiri** to manufacture the mechanical enclosures of mobile phones.

218. Govt has **increased budget of Dept of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences by 30%** as compared to the revised estimate of 2020-21.

219. The **Reserve Bank of India** has approved the takeover of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (**DHFL**) by Piramal Group on February 18, 2021.

220. E-commerce giant **Amazon** has announced plans to begin manufacturing devices in India. This is the **first Amazon manufacturing line in India** and reiterates the firm's commitment to the government's Make in India for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Amazon will commence manufacturing with contract manufacturer **Cloud Network Technology**, a subsidiary of Foxconn, in Chennai, and start production later this year. It will churn out hundreds of thousands of **Fire TV Stick devices** every year.

221. **Hyundai Motors** has launched Transformer-like robocar named as '**TIGER X-1**', that can travel over the most challenging terrains on the Earth as well as on other planets. **TIGER: Transforming Intelligent Ground Excursion Robot**.

222. MSME Minister **Nitin Gadkari** has inaugurated **50 artisan-based SFURTI clusters** spread over 18 States.

- These clusters will have over 42 thousand artisans belonging to traditional segments of muslin, khadi, coir, handicraft, handlooms, wood craft, leather, pottery, etc
- These clusters have been inaugurated in **Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, TN, UP and WB**

223.S&P Global Ratings has forecasted that India will be one of the fastest growing emerging market economies with **10%** growth in the next fiscal, during **webinar on India outlook for 2021**.

- **India's economy** has stabilized over recent months, with progressively better manufacturing, services, labour market, and revenue data.
- S&P Global Ratings Headquarters: **New York, United States**.

224.China has again become **India's top trading partner** in the year 2020. The reason was that India was still dependent on the import of heavy machines, telecom equipment and home appliances from China.

- The provisional data from the trade between both the countries in the year **2020** stood at **\$77.7 billion**.
- However, the trade had decreased as compared to the 2019 trade total of \$85.5 billion.
- The imports of heavy machines etc outweighed India's efforts to cut down its dependence on trade.
- As a result of which, the bilateral trade gap of India with China was \$40 billion in the year 2020.
- **Total imports from China stood at \$58.7 billion** which was **more than India's combined imports from U.S. and U.A.E.**
- The data further highlights that, India was able to lower the imports from its Asian neighbors despite there were demand disruptions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

225.India's External Affairs Minister has signed **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Partnership Agreement-(CECPA)** with Mauritius

- FTA is India's first pact with any African country and will help Mauritius to emerge as a hub of Africa
- India has also offered a **USD 100 million Line of Credit (LoC) to Mauritius** to facilitate procurement of defence assets.

226.The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) have signed an MoU to **promote the Export-Oriented Marine Product**. The MoU was signed in order to synergise the programmes related to export-oriented capture and culture in fisheries sectors and other allied sectors.

227.The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved the acquisition of **118 Arjun Mark 1A tanks** on February 23, 2021. The approval was given for the Indian Army at a cost of ₹6,000 crores. This move will be a boost for the indigenisation in defence sector.

228.The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has set up the working group committee so as to relook its **information and security guidelines**. The need to set up the panel was felt in the aftermath of exponential increase in cyberattacks across the world amid the ongoing covid-19 pandemic.

229.The National Statistical Office (NSO) recently released its data on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the financial year 2021. As per the NSO, the Indian economy will be **expanded by 0.4% in the December quarter**.

230. ICRA has projected the **Indian economy to contract 7% in current fiscal (FY21)**. For the next fiscal, i.e. **FY22 (2021-22)**, ICRA expects a considerable rebound in India's economic growth to **10.5%** due to higher central government spending, and a pick-up in consumption.

- **ICRA (Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Ltd)** is an Indian independent and professional investment information and credit rating agency
- Headquarters: **Gurugram, India.**

231. **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** has signed MoU with **MOL (Asia Oceania)** for **transportation of Liquefied Natural Gas** through barges on **National Waterways-1** and **National Waterways-2**

- IWAI will provide support for, facilitating with adequate fairway, handling of LPG cargo on IWAI terminals or Multimodal Terminals at Haldia, Sahibganj and Varanasi.

232. **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched The **City Innovation Exchange (CiX)** platform.

- The platform will be a **significant** addition to the growing innovation **ecosystem of India** and focuses on fostering innovative practices in cities.
- The **CiX** will connect cities to innovators across the national ecosystem to design innovative solutions for their pressing challenges.
- The Platform has more than **400 start-ups**, 100 smart cities, more than **150 challenges** statements.

233. **Khadi and Village Industry Commission's e-Market Portal** has registered a gross turnover of over **Rs. one crore 10 lakh** in just eight months of its launch.

- This portal has provided a wide marketing platform for various Khadi and village industry products to a larger population.
- Online orders have been received from all 31 States and UT including the far-flung Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir among others.

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FINANCE & BANKING

234. **Bharti AXA General Insurance** has launched '**Krishi Sakha**' app to help farmers in adopting best farming practices, enhancing productivity by catering to specific needs of farmers.

235. **Govt** has **increased FDI limit from 49 to 74%** in Insurance Companies and allowed foreign ownership and control with safeguards. Under this, majority of Directors on Board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50% of Directors being Independent Directors, and specified percentage of profits.

236. The Reserve Bank of India (**RBI**) on has introduced a **Risk-Based Internal Audit (RBIA)** system. It has made it mandatory for select non-banking financial companies and urban co-operative banks (UCBs). As per the norms, all the deposit-taking non-banking financial companies (**NBFCs**) with the **asset size of Rs 5,000 crore** will have to implement this system. Also, the **UCBs** having asset size of **Rs 500 crore** will have to implement the system. The system is required to be implemented **by March 31, 2022**. The performance of the RBIA system will be looked by the

board of the entity or its audit committee. The board of the entity is already responsible to look after the internal audit function of the organisation.

237. GoI has announced **introduction of unified securities markets code** in Budget 2021-22, boosting ease of doing business in **India's financial markets**. Under this, provisions of **SEBI Act, 1992, Depositories Act, 1996, Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956** and **Government Securities Act, 2007** will be consolidated into rationalized single Securities Markets Code. Govt will also support **Fin-Tech hub development at GIFT-IFSC** and frame **Permanent institutional framework**.

238. Union Finance Minister, **Nirmala Sitharaman** while presenting **Union Budget FY 2021-22** has approved policy of strategic disinvestment of public sector enterprises. It consists of 2-fold sectors:

- **Strategic Sector:** to be privatised or merged or subsidiarized with other CPSEs or closed. Ex: Atomic energy, Space and Defence, Transport, Banking, Insurance and financial services
- **Non- Strategic Sector:** In this sector, CPSEs will be privatised, otherwise shall be closed

239. Govt has extended **eligibility for claiming tax holiday for start-ups by 1 more year** till 31st of March 2022 to incentivise start-ups in the country. Govt has also extended capital gains exemption for investment in start-ups by one more year to incentivise funding of the start-ups.

240. Govt has proposed to infuse **Rs 20,000 crore to re-capitalized Public Sector Banks**.

241. **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** has amended **One Person Companies (OPCs) rules** with effect from **April 2021** to benefits Startups & Innovators in the country. Previously NRIs were not allowed to incorporate OPCs. Now any natural person, who is an Indian citizen, whether resident in India or otherwise would be allowed to form an OPC. For being considered as a resident in India, residency period has been proposed to be reduced to 120 days from 182 days for NRIs.

242. RBI has announced to set up of **24*7 helpline** for digital payment services, integrated ombudsman scheme, CTS across all bank branches and allowing **retail investors** to open Gilt accounts with RBI. The **major payment system operators** will give information on available grievance redress mechanisms by September 2021. RBI will provide retail investors online access to the government securities market along with the facility to open their gilt securities account with the RBI.

243. **Federal Bank** has announced the launch of "**FedFirst**", a special **savings account scheme** for children below **18 years of age**. The account helps children develop healthy saving and spending habits, thereby giving them the **freedom to save, spend and earn**.

244. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** will set up an expert committee on **Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**. The committee, involving all stakeholders, will provide a medium-term road map for strengthening the **sector, enable faster resolution/rehabilitation of UCBs**.

245. The six-member **Monetary Policy Committee** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, headed by Governor **Shaktikanta Das**, has decided to maintain the status quo on policy rate amid sticky rate of inflation. At this point, the repo rate or the rate at which RBI lends to banks stands unchanged at **4 per cent**. The reverse repo rate also stayed unchanged at **3.35 per cent**. The MPC committee members voted unanimously in favour of the decision.

246. The **key decisions taken in the Monetary Policy Committee meeting** are:

- Policy Repo Rate: **4.00%**

- Reverse Repo Rate: **3.35%**
- Marginal Standing Facility Rate: **4.25%**
- Bank Rate: **4.25%**
- CRR: **3%**
- SLR: **18.00%**

RBI Monetary Policy Highlights & Key Decisions:

- The MPC continued to maintain the accommodative stance.
- The MPC has predicted the economic growth rate i.e. GDP growth rate of India at **10.5** per cent in 2021-22 (FY22).
- This is the first MPC meeting after the presentation of the **Union Budget 2021-22**.
- The six-member MPC headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das meets every two months to analyze the state of the Indian economy and inflation and address the monetary issues in the country.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will integrate the consumer grievances redressal under a single ombudsman as opposed to the three grievance redressal schemes working at present. RBI will adopt the 'One Nation One Ombudsman' approach to make the alternate dispute redress mechanism simple and more responsive to the users.
- The mechanism will cater to all the customers from banks, NBFCs and the non-bank issuers of prepaid payment instruments.
- The e-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme will be rolled out in June 2021.

247. RBI has released **Annual Report of the Ombudsman Schemes for the year 2019-20** that depicts an increase of 65% in receipt of complaints out of which almost 92% have been disposed of.

- RBI has 3 Ombudsmen that can be approached for grievances:
- **Banking** (ATM & Debit Cards, Electronic Banking complaints)
- **NBFC** (non-observance of regulatory guidelines, lack of transparency/ loan agreement and levy of charges without notice complaints)
- **Digital transactions** (fund transfer)

248. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced to launch '**NPCI PayAuth Challenge**'. It is a global-level hackathon that will be organised to get the alternatives of the authentication of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions. One such alternative options is the use of biometric while making transactions.

249. The Finance Ministry has decided to **infuse Rs 3,000 crore capital** into the state-owned **general insurance companies** in the fourth quarter of FY 2020-21.

250. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched **Financial Literacy Week (FLW)** from Feb 8 to 12, 2021 to propagate financial education on a particular theme across the country.

- FLW theme 2021: **Credit Discipline and Credit from Formal Institutions**
- FLW theme is one of the strategic objectives of **National Strategy for Financial Education 2020-2025**
- Focus will be on responsible borrowing, borrowing from formal institution and timely repayments

251. The Reserve Bank of India has announced that the Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will provide USD 400 million to Maldives project. **Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank)** will provide **\$400 million** to **Maldives** through **Line of Credit (LoC)** to fund **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)** with effect from Jan 28, 2021.

252. Private general insurer **ICICI Lombard** has launched the '**Corporate India Risk Index**'. This is intended to be a unified, standardised corporate risk index that spans industries and companies. This will help companies understand the level of risk that their business is facing and also assist in developing a successful risk aversion plan.

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253. The New Development Bank (NDB) has announced to invest **\$100 million** into the **NIIF Fund of Funds (FoF)**. With the NDB's investment of \$100 million, the NIIF FoF has now secured \$800 million in commitments. NDB has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Government of India (GoI) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) as an investor in the NIIF FoF.

254. The Reserve Bank of India (**RBI**) has recently released its data on the Bank Credit and Deposits. The data shows that, the Bank credit grew by **5.93 per cent** which now accounts for Rupees 5 lakh crore for the fortnight that ended January 29, 2021.

- It also highlights that, the deposits in the banks have rose by 11.06 per cent that accounts for Rupees 98 lakh crore for the same period.
- Thus, in the fortnight that ended January 31, 2020, the bank credit stands at ₹05 lakh crore while the deposits stand at Rupees 133.24 lakh crore.
- The RBI data further shows that, during the first nine months of the fiscal year 2020-2021, the bank credit increased by 3.2 percent while the deposits increased by 8.5 per cent.
- The data highlights that, the non-food credit growth of banks was 5.9 per cent in December 2020.
- It also highlights that, the growth in the credit to agriculture and allied activities has increased to 9.4 per cent as compared to 5.3 per cent growth in December 2019.
- Loans to industry have decreased by 1.2 per cent because of contraction in the credit to large industries by 2.4 per cent.
- Further, the Personal loans decreased by 9.5 per cent in the current financial year (2020-2021).

255. **RBI** has constituted **8-member expert committee on Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs)** to examine issues, suggesting a road map for strengthening it.

- Chairperson: **N. S. Vishwanathan** (RBI Deputy Governor)
- It will also **review current regulatory approach** and recommend suitable measures.
- It suggests effective measures for faster resolution of UCBs.

256. **ICICI Lombard** and **Frost & Sullivan** has launched unified, standardised index that spans industries and companies named as **Corporate India Risk Index**.

- It will help companies understand the level of risk that their business is facing and also assist in developing a successful risk aversion plan
- Index consists of **15 sectors** including IT, automotive, pharma, etc covering **150 top companies, 2 risk elements across 6 broad dimensions**.

257. To facilitate the privatization of **PSU banks**, govt is likely to bring amendments to **2 Acts**.

- The two laws to be amended are **Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970** and the **Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980**.
- The four banks to be privatized are **Bank of Maharashtra, Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank** and the **Central Bank of India**.

258. **Flipkart** has partnered with **ICICI Lombard** to offer its customers group health insurance policy named as '**Group SafeGuard**' insurance.

259. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has brought the **State Bank of Sikkim** under its regulation. State Bank of Sikkim is a state-owned banking institution. The headquarter of the bank is at Gangtok, Sikkim. It operates under the jurisdiction of the State of Sikkim.

260. The finance ministry has allowed all the **private sector banks to participate in business related to government** such as small savings schemes and collection of taxes pension payments. Currently, only some of the big private sectors are allowed to conduct government-related businesses.

261. The Finance Ministry has announced that, the Central government has signed a loan agreement with the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** for the **Assam Power Transmission Project**. The loan agreement was signed worth **\$304 million**. This loan will be used for strengthening electricity transmission system in the state of Assam.

262. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) has launched a **standard personal accident cover** called **Saral Suraksha Bima**. This accident cover will be mandatorily offered by the general and health insurers **from April 1, 2021**. This product has assured **maximum sum of Rs 1 crore** while the **minimum assured sum of Rs 2.5 lakh**.

263. **Report on Currency and Finance (RCF)** by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) official has recommended that, the time span that was considered to measure whether monetary policy-setting panel has failed in achieving its objectives or not **should be of four quarters rather than current time period of three-quarter**.

- The report also recommends that roll the terms for the members in six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in order to moderate the political influence at the place of current appointments for the fixed term.
- Report highlights that, the definition for failure of MPC needs to be revised from the present three-quarter horizon.
- *According to the report, the failure can be redefined as inflation overshooting or inflation undershooting the upper and lower tolerance bands around the set target for time span of four consecutive quarters.*
- Report emphasised that, there should be a greater flexibility for monetary policy and MPC in order to go through sharp movements in food prices which are brought about by transient factors.
- The report further states that, the definition of failure that balances two objectives will help in preventing the volatility in the output growth which is brought by the policy responses.

264. The **Central Board of Direct Taxes** has **extended the last date** for availing of the direct tax Vivaad Se Vishwas dispute resolution scheme to **March 31, 2021**.

- This is the fifth extension of the scheme. Those willing to settle their tax disputes under the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Act can file their declarations till March 31 and pay the settled tax amount by April 30, 2021.

265. **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** signed MoU with **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** for exchange of data for enhancing ease of doing business in India and improve overall regulatory enforcement.

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AWARDS & RECOGNITION

266. World's leading dictionary publisher, **Oxford** has named 'Aatmanirbharta' as the **Hindi word of the year 2020**.

267. **Manasa Varanasi (23 years)** has been declared as the winner of **VLCC Femina Miss India World 2020**. She hails from Telangana and is a financial information exchange analyst.

268. Australian wildlife photographer, **Robert Irwin** has won **Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award Contest**.

269. Tamil movie **Koozhangal** has won 'Tiger' award at **50th edition of International Film Festival Rotterdam 2021**.

270. **SERB** has announced **SERB Women Excellence Award 2021**, on the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February).

- **Winners:**
- Shobhna Kapoor
- Antara Banerjee
- Sonu Gandhi
- Ritu Gupta

271. **S.Theodore Baskaran** who is a writer, a historian, a naturalist and an activist has won the Sanctuary Lifetime Service Award, 2020. The award was instituted by the **Sanctuary Nature Foundation**. Theodore Baskaran was chosen for the award in the light of his dedication to the wildlife conservation.

272. Andhra Pradesh CM, **Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy** has been conferred the **Skoch Chief Minister of the Year award**. This Award has been presented to the CM by Chairman of Skoch group, **Sameer Kochhar** personally at Tadepalli in Andhra Pradesh.

273. Five **Indian-origin** personalities have been featured in **TIME magazine's** annual list of **100 "emerging leaders"**.

- **Vijaya Gadde** (Twitter's lawyer), **Rishi Sunak** (UK FM), **Apoorva Mehta** (Instacart CEO) **Shikha Gupta** (ED Get Us PPE) are featured in the list. Bhim Army chief **Chandra Shekhar Aazad** is also on the list.
- The **2021 TIME100 Next** is an expansion of TIME's flagship **TIME100 franchise** of the most influential people in the world.

274. **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** has received **Asia Environmental Enforcement Award 2020** for combatting transboundary environmental crime

- It is the **5th edition of the awards**.
- Award was presented by **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**, **UN Development Programme (UNDP)**, **UN Office on Drugs and Crime**, **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**, **INTERPOL** and **World Customs Organization**

275. **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO)** and **Arbor Day Foundation** have recognized **Hyderabad** as **2020 Tree City of World**.

- Hyderabad has been selected for its commitment to growing and maintaining urban forestry under Haritha Haram programme and its Urban Forest Parks plan.
- **5 metrics of evaluation:** Establish Responsibility, Set the Rules, Know What You Have, Allocate Resources, Celebrate Achievements.

276. An Indian social activist, **Anjali Bhardwaj**, who works on issues of transparency and accountability has been selected for the “**United State International Anti-Corruption Champions Award**” along with the other 11 anti-corruption champions. These names were announced by Joe Biden administration.

277. Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will receive the **CERAWeek Global Energy and Environment Leadership Award** for his commitment to expanding India’s leadership in sustainable development to meet the country’s, and the world’s, future energy needs. The award will be given to him during an annual international energy conference, which will be held virtually from March 1 to 5, 2021.

278. Prestigious **Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival awards 2021** has been announced to honour the best in Indian cinema, television, music, and OTT

- Best Actor (Female): **Deepika Padukone, Chhapaak**
- Best Actor (Male): **Akshay Kumar, Laxmii**
- Critic’s Best Actress: **Kiara Advani, Guilty**
- Critic’s Best Actor: **Late Sushant Singh Rajput, Dil Bechara**
- Best Film: **Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior**
- Best International Feature Film: **Parasite**
- Best Web Series: **Scam: 1992**

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PERSON IN NEWS

279. **Rama Mohan Rao Amara** has been appointed as the **Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of **SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd (SBI Card)**.

280. Tibetan spiritual leader **Dalai Lama** has penned down his new book titled as ‘**The Little Book of Encouragement**’. This Little Book of Encouragement has quotes and words of wisdom to promote human happiness. It has been edited by **Renuka Singh** and published by **Penguin Random House**.

281. **Ajay Singh** has been re-elected as **President of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI)**.

282. A 25-year-old Kashmiri woman, **Ayesha Aziz**, has become the youngest female pilot in the country. She became the youngest student pilot to get a license at the **age of 15** in 2011.

283. Google Cloud has appointed **Bikram Singh Bedi** as the new **Managing Director (MD)** for its **India Business**.

284. Former vice president of India, **Mohammad Hamid Ansari** has written a book titled '**BY MANY A HAPPY ACCIDENT: Recollections of a Life**'

285. **Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL)** has bagged global recognition from Airports Council International World's 'Voice of the Customer' award.

286. Former Miss World and Bollywood, Hollywood star **Priyanka Chopra Jonas** has come up with her memoir titled as '**Unfinished**'. It has been published by **Penguin Random House**.

287. Justice **Puligoru Venkata Sanjay Kumar** has been sworn-in as the **Chief Justice of Manipur High Court** at Raj Bhavan, Imphal.

288. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has appointed **Preeti Sinha** as its Executive Secretary. She is an Indian-origin investment and development banker.

289. **Ajay Mathur** has been elected as the new **Director General of International Solar Alliance (ISA)** as announced at the first special assembly of ISA members.

290. Award-winning writer, journalist and speaker **Meghna Pant** has come up with her new novel titled as '**The Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Good News**'

291. **Jasmine Harrison (21 years)** has become the **youngest woman to row solo across an Ocean**

- She hails from Thirsk, North Yorkshire in UK
- She achieved the feat by finishing **top in 2020 Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge**, organized by Atlantic Campaigns.

292. Vice-President **M Venkaiah Naidu** has released a book titled as '**Maverick Messiah**', which is based on the political biography of '**N T Rama Rao**'.

- The book has been authored by senior journalist, **Ramesh Kandula**.
- **Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (N T Rama Rao)** served as the **Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh** for three terms from the Telugu Desam Party, which was founded by him 1982.

293. **Vijay Sampla** assumed charge as the **Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** in New Delhi

- He succeeded **Ram Shankar Katheria**, who served NCSC till May 2020.
- He served as former **Union Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment** from 2014-19

294. Veteran actor **Kabir Bedi** has come out with his memoir titled as '**Stories I Must Tell: The Emotional Journey of an Actor**'

- It will be published by **Westland Publications**.

295. **Irakli Garibashvili** has been sworn in as the **Prime Minister of Georgia** for his second term.

- He was the youngest person to assume the PM office at the **age of 31 years**.

296. Renowned Russian supermodel, entrepreneur, public speaker and philanthropist **Natalia Mikhailovna Vodianova (39 years)** has been appointed as **U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) goodwill ambassador**

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OBITUARIES

297. Well Known Theatre Director and wonderful stage designer, **Bansi Kaul** (71 years) passed away. He was the designer and show director for the **Commonwealth Games' opening ceremony (2010)** and **art director for Khajuraho Festival (1986 and 1987)**.

298. Noted jurist and a former Governor of Bihar and Jharkhand, Justice (Retd.) **M. Rama Jois** (88 years) passed away, due to age-related ailments. He is former Rajya Sabha MP and had also served as the Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court.

299. Major General (retired) **Basant Kumar Mahapatra** (87 years) passed away at a hospital in Bhubaneswar. He participated in major battles including **1962 Indo-China war**, and **1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan war**, has passed away.

300. Former Union minister **Captain Satish Sharma** (73-years) passed away in **Goa**. Sharma served as the Union Petroleum and **Natural Gas Minister** between 1993 and 1996 in the **PV Narasimha Rao government**.

301. Former chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), **Rahul Khullar** (68 years) passed away following prolonged illness.

- Khullar was a **1975-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer** and was also a **former Income Tax Commissioner**.

302. Well-known poet **Vishnunarayanan Namboothiri** (81-years) passed away in **Thiruvananthapuram**.

- He was awarded the **Padma Shri** in 2014. He is also a recipient of several literary honours, including the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award.

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IMPORTANT DAYS

303. **World Wetlands Day (WWD)** is observed every year on **February 2** across the globe. This day is celebrated to mark the date of the adoption of the **Convention on Wetlands (February 2, 1971)** in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Theme 2021: **'Wetlands and Water'**

304. **World Cancer Day** is observed on **4 February** every year by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)**. World Cancer Day theme 2021: **'I Am And I Will'**

305. **International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation** is a **United Nations-sponsored annual awareness day** that takes place on **6th February** as part of the UN's efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation.

2021 theme: "No Time for Global Inaction, Unite, Fund, and Act to End Female Genital Mutilation.

306.The world celebrates the **International Day of Women and Girls in Science** every year on the **11th day of February**. The year 2021 marked the 6th International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The day was celebrated under the theme **“Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19”**.

307.**National Women’s Day** in India is observed on **13 February** every year to commemorate the **birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu**.

308. **World Radio Day** is observed every year on **13 February** to recognize radio as a powerful medium, which brings people together from every corner of the globe, to promote diversity and help build a more peaceful and inclusive world.

- Theme for World Radio Day 2021: **New World, New Radio**.
- Theme is further divided into three sub-themes:
 - **Evolution**
 - **Innovation**
 - **Connection**

309.**International Mother Language Day** is observed on **21st February** every year to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. It was proclaimed by **UNESCO** in **November 1999** and first celebrated in 2000. Theme 2021: **Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society**.

310.The **World Day of Social Justice** is observed on February 20 every year. The day is dedicated to advantages and issues which can be tackled by Social Justice. In the year 2021, the day was celebrated under **Theme– “A call for social justice in the Digital Economy.”**

311.The Bhakti Movement Saint **Guru Ravidas Jayanti** is being observed on **February 27, 2021** across the country. He is well known for his efforts in eradicating caste system from India.

312.**National Science Day** is observed in India every year on **28 February** to spread the message about the importance of science used in the daily life of the people.

- The days mark the discovery of the **Raman effect** by Indian physicist Sir C. V. Raman (28 February 1928). He was awarded Nobel Prize in Physics for this discovery in 1930.
- Theme 2021: **Future of STI: Impacts on Education, Skills, and Work**.

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SPORTS

313. **Khelo India Zaskar winter sports and youth festival** has been concluded at **Zaskar Valley of Ladakh**. It is a **13 day long** and is a first of its kind was organized by Department of Sports & Youth Services under **Khelo India** banner in collaboration with **Ladakh Tourism Department**.

314.Dinesh Karthik led **Tamil Nadu team** beat **Baroda** to win **Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy 2020-21** by 7 wickets

315. India's wicketkeeper-batsman **Rishabh Pant (23 years)** has been nominated for **ICC Men's Player of the Month award** along with **England skipper Joe Root** and **Ireland's Paul Stirling**.

316. **International Cricket Council (ICC)** has announced **BYJU'S** as its **global partner from 2021 to 2023**.

317. **Kings XI Punjab** (Established in 2008) were renamed as 'Punjab Kings'. Punjab Kings have played in all 13 seasons of the IPL thus far, but they are yet to win a title.

318. **Vivo** has returned as the **title sponsors of Indian Premier League (IPL) for the 2021 edition** as informed by IPL Governing Council chairman **Brijesh Patel** in Chennai.

319. South-African all-rounder cricketer **Chris Morris (33 years)** has broken all record by becoming the **most expensive player in the history of Indian Premier League (IPL) auction**, held in Chennai. IPL franchise **Rajasthan Royals** has bought Chris Morris for Rs 16.25 crore.

320. **Australian Open 2021 Tennis Championship** has been concluded. Winners:

- a. **Men's Singles:** Novak Djokovic (Serbia) won his 18th grand slam after defeating Daniil Medvedev
- b. **Women's Singles:** Naomi Osaka (Japan) won 4th grand slam defeated Jennifer Brady (US)

321. In sports current affairs, **Manika Batra** has won the 82nd Senior National Table Tennis Championship. She beaten **Reeth Rishya** at the **Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex in Panchkula**.

322. The chief minister of *Karnataka*, **BS Yeddyurappa**, announced that **Karnataka** will be hosting the second **Khelo India University Games (KIUG)** in the year 2021. The Khelo India University Games will be inaugurated by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**. Games will be held in **the Jain University** and other venues of the state.

323. The President of India, **Ram Nath Kovind**, has inaugurated the **world's largest Stadium at Motera, in Gujarat** on February 24, 2021. The Motera stadium was later renamed as the **Narendra Modi Stadium**. This stadium has surpassed the **Melbourne Cricket Ground** and became the largest stadium in the world.

324. The second edition of the **Khelo India Winter Games** began at **Gulmarg** in the Union Territory of **Jammu and Kashmir** on February 26, 2021.

325. The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has **restored the recognition of Gymnastics Federation of India (GFI)** as the **National Sports Federation (NSF)** with immediate effect till December 31, 2021.

326. **PM Modi** has virtually inaugurated **2nd Khelo India National Winter Games** today in **Gulmarg**

- The game will be conducted from **Feb 26** and will continue till **March 2, 2021**
- It is being organized by **Youth Affairs and Sports ministry** in collaboration with **Winter Games Association of Jammu and Kashmir** and **J&K Sports Council**
- Athletes from **27 states and UT** are competing in the Games

327. **Dushyant Chautala (32 years)** has been re-elected as the **President of Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI)** for a tenure of four-years.

- He is also the **current Deputy Chief Minister of Haryana**.

328. India's dashing batter **Yusuf Pathan (38 years)** has announced his **retirement** from all formats of the game.

