



CURRENT AFFAIRS (JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 2021) :

National

- ⇒ The INS Kiltan recently arrived at Sihanoukville Port, Cambodia under Mission SAGAR III. The ship is to deliver fifteen tonnes of HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) for flood affected Cambodia. SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) reiterates the position of India as a dependable partner, first responder and preferred security partner. Earlier, in November 2020, Mission SAGAR-II was launched in which INS Airavat delivered food aid to Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea. Mission SAGAR I was launched in May 2020 in which the INS Kesari carried medical assistance and food items to Seychelles, Mauritius, Maldives, Madagascar and Comoros.
- ⇒ The Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation of the world's largest hybrid renewable energy park in Kutch, Gujarat. The park will generate 30,000 MW power through solar panels and windmills on 72,600 hectares area.
- ⇒ Bengaluru based satellite imaging startup Pixxel joined hands with New Space India Limited (NSIL), Department of Space to launch India's first remote sensing satellite. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that Pixxel's first satellite 'Anand' will be launched in its PSLV-C51 mission in February 2021. As part of the agreement, Pixxel will launch a constellation of 30 earth imaging small satellites between December 2022 and June 2023.
- ⇒ The Assam Government recently tabled a bill that will abolish all the state-run Madrasas and will convert them into schools from April 1, 2021. There are 610 state run Madrasas in Assam. According to a survey conducted by a Guwahati University Professor, it has been found that the parents and guardians of most of the students of Madrasas are not aware that their children are not taught regular subjects there. Rather they are imparted lessons of theology. Therefore, it is essential to convert the Madrasas into regular schools that provide primary and secondary education.
- ⇒ The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently handed over three systems developed by DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organization) to the chiefs of the Defence Forces. They are : (i) The IMSAS (Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System), handed over to the Indian Naval Chief Admiral Karambir Singh. IMSAS is an indigenous, high performance intelligent software system that provides Global Maritime Situational picture and analytical capabilities to the Indian Navy. (ii) The Astra Mk-1, handed over to the Air Chief Marshal

RKS Bhadauria. ASTRA Mk-1 weapon system was developed by Defence Research and Development Laboratory. It is an indigenously developed first beyond-visual-range missile that can be launched from Light Combat Aircraft, Sukhoi-30, Mig-29 and Mig-29K and (iii) BOSS (Border Surveillance System), handed over to the Army Chief General MM Naravane. It is an all-weather electronic surveillance system. It was developed by the Instruments Research and Development Establishment operating under DRDO.

- ⇒ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a virtual bilateral summit inaugurated a railway link between Haldibari in India and Chilahati in Bangladesh. There are now five rail links that are actively operational between India and Bangladesh : Petrapole (India) – Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India) – Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India) – Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Radhikapur India) – Birol (Bangladesh) and now Haldibari (India) – Chilahati (Bangladesh).
- ⇒ The sixth India-CLMV Business Conclave 2020 was recently held virtually. The CLMV countries are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. During the conclave, India invited the CLMV countries to join International Solar Alliance and the Resilient Supply Chain Initiative. The Conclave was held under the theme 'Building Bridges for Constructive Development'. During the conclave, India mentioned that it is ready to share COVID-19 vaccine with the CLMV countries. The CLMV countries have a unique position in Southeast Asia region. The countries act as a gateway for the market access to European Union and China and also other markets. Through various trade agreements India intends to increase its trade and investment in these countries as they hold advantage of free trade agreements with countries such as China. India's trade to China through this route will be much cheaper. In other words, India will invest in these countries and earn the benefits by exporting the return to China.

International

- ⇒ Recently, the UC FTC (Federal Trade Commission) filed an anti-trust lawsuit against Facebook under Sherman Anti-trust Act. The social media giant is under the scanner for its acquisition of Instagram and Whatsapp. According to the lawsuit, the actions of Facebook deny consumers the benefit of competition. The Sherman Act is an anti-trust Act of the USA, passed in 1890. It was a move to prevent the creation of monopolies in the industries through use of contracts, conspiracies and other business practices that restricted trade. Its main purpose was to promote healthy competition in the US economy.



- ⇒ The Five Eyes (FVEY) is an intelligence alliance network comprising five nations namely Australia, Canada, Britain, US and New Zealand. Japan is now to join the Five Eyes network to become the sixth eye. The Five Eyes network collaborated to respond against the increasing threats by China and North Korea.
- ⇒ Prime Minister Narendra Modi was invited by his British counterpart Boris Johnson to attend the UK-hosted G7 summit. India is one of the three guest nations alongside South Korea and Australia. G7 is a group of seven most industrialised countries of the world namely, US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada. This year, the grouping is expected to become D10 following its expansion to include 10 biggest democracies in the world. It aims to create alternative suppliers of 5G equipment and other technologies avoiding reliance on China.
- ⇒ The United States recently imposed sanctions on Turkey under section 231 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The sanctions were imposed for buying Russian made S400 anti-Missile system. The United States has reiterated its warning to India and other countries upon acquiring equipments from Russia.
- ⇒ On December 12, 2020, the Paris Climate Agreement completed its fifth anniversary. Paris Agreement aims to limit the increase in global warming temperature to well below 2, preferably 1.5 degree Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. To commemorate the occasion, the United Kingdom had called for a Global Climate Summit. It is also called 'International Climate Ambition Summit' which was organised and co-hosted by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy. The summit was a predecessor to the 26th COP scheduled to be held at Glasgow in 2021. Australia, the supporter of fossil fuels has been kept out of the summit. The other notable absences were Brazil, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Poland and Turkey. The United States did not attend the summit as President Trump walked out of the Paris Agreement.

Economy

- ⇒ Under the money circulation and credit control policy of the RBI, the existing rates (as on 15.02. 2021) are :
 - * Repo Rate (*Repo Rate is the rate at which commercial banks borrow money from the central bank, i.e., RBI*) : 4.00%.
 - * Reverse Repo Rate (*Reverse Repo Rate is the rate at which the commercial banks deposit their surplus money to the central bank*) : 3.35%

- * Statutory Liquidity Ratio (*SLR is the percentage of deposits that commercial banks have to maintain with themselves*) : 18.00%
- * CRR (*Cash Reserve Ratio is the proportion of deposits which the banks have to keep with the central bank*) : 3%
- * Bank Rate (*Bank rate is the rate at which central bank, i.e. RBI, rediscounts the bills of exchange of commercial banks*) : 4.25%
- * MSF (*Marginal Standing Facility is the loan banks are permitted to avail themselves from the RBI on overnight basis, using its SLR securities*) : 4.25%.
- * Base Rate (*Base Rate reflects the actual cost of banks that has to be covered through lending. Banks cannot lend money below the Base Rate, which varies from bank to bank*) : 7.30% - 8.80%.
- * MCLR (*The Marginal Cost of Funds Based Lending Rate refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI*): 6.55% - 7.05%.
(Difference: Base Rate is governed by the average cost of funds while MCLR is governed by the current cost of funds. MCLR replaced the Base Rate on April 1, 2016. Under the MCLR regime, banks must adjust their interest rates as soon as the repo rate changes. Earlier it was not so.)
- * Term Deposit (Fixed Deposit) Rate (more than 1 year): 4.90% - 5.50%.
- * Savings A/c.: 2.70% - 3.00%.
- ⇒ The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) and the United Nations Development Programme (India) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create the first Social Impact bond of India. A Social Impact Bond is also called pay-for-success bond or pay-for-success financing. Social Impact Bonds operate over a fixed period of time. They do not provide fixed rate of return. The outcome of Social Impact bonds is completely dependent on success of social outcome.
- ⇒ The Praja Foundation recently released the Urban Governance Index, which ranks states to indicate where they stand in terms of real empowerment of grass-root democracy and local self government.. Odisha topped the list of states followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.
- ⇒ State Bank of India, National Payments Corporation of India and Japan's JCB International Company announced the launch of 'SBI RuPay JCB Platinum Contactless Debit Card'. It has come with a unique dual-interface feature that will enable customers to perform both contact and contactless transactions in the domestic market and seamless contact transactions overseas.



- ⇒ India ranked 131 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Norway topped the index, followed by Switzerland and Iceland. Usually, the UNDP uses three major parameters to calculate the Human Development Index -- Life Expectancy at birth, maternal mortality rate and political participation of women. This year in 2020, for the first time, the UNDP has introduced new parameters namely CO2 emission and Material foot print and introduced Planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI). However, it is an experimental metric and has not yet been adopted in calculating the HDI. It is the level of human development adjusted by carbon dioxide emissions per person and material footprint per capita. The material foot print is the amount of fossil fuels, metals and other resources consumed by a country to produce the required Goods and Services. In an ideal scenario where there are no pressures on the planet, the PHDI equals the HDI. However, all countries of the world have substantial pressure from their part. If this new metric is taken into account, Ireland tops the list while India moves 8 positions up from the HDI rank of 131.
- ⇒ The Human Freedom Index has been published by the Cato Institute and Fraser Institute. According to the Index, there is decrease in personal freedom since 2008 globally. India ranked 111 in the Human Freedom Index, 2020. New Zealand topped the index followed by Switzerland and Hong Kong. However, the rank of Hong Kong is expected to decline in the future due to aggressive interventions by China in the region.
- ⇒ The Global Climate Change Performance Index was recently released by the New Climate Institute, Germanwatch and CAN (Climate Action Network). India ranked 10th in the Climate Change Performance Index. None of the countries was in the top three ranks because none of them was in the path of meeting their Paris Agreement commitment. Sweden was at the fourth place followed by UK and Denmark.
- ⇒ The Good Governance Day is celebrated annually on December 25, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. On that day, a new web portal and mobile app 'e-Sampada' was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The new application provides a single window for all the services including allotment for new one lakh government residential accommodations in 25 cities, booking of 1176 holiday home rooms and venues like 5, Ashoka Road for social functions etc.
- ⇒ Singapore based 'Eat Just Inc', a maker of meat and egg substitutes has been approved to sale its laboratory-created chicken. The cultured chicken, created from animal cells without the slaughter of any chicken will debut in Singapore under the 'Good Meat' brand.
- ⇒ An investigation by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has found that the majority of the honey sold in Indian market is adulterated. The use of honey recently increased widely as an immunity booster. But the CSE, which tested 13 honey brand using the German technique Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Spectroscopy detected the adulteration.
- ⇒ The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation recently began oil production from Ashokenagar-1 well located in the Bengal Basin. With this Bengal Basin becomes the eighth oil producing basin in India. The other oil producing basins of India are located in Mumbai Offshore, Krishna-Godavari river basin, Cauvery, Assam Shelf, Rajasthan, Assam-Arakan Fold Belt and Cambay.
- ⇒ The Reliance Industries Limited and British Petroleum (BP) recently announced the start of gas production from the R Cluster, which is the deepest Off-shore gas field in Asia. The R Cluster is an off-shore gas field which is a part of the KG-D6 block of the Krishna Godavari Basin. The other 2 deep-water gas projects in the block are Satellite Cluster and the MJ gas field.
- ⇒ The Union Ministry of Power recently drafted the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020. These rules are being drafted for the first time in the Indian history. A new category of Prosumers has been identified under the new rule. Prosumers are those consumers who have the right to produce electricity for self-use and inject excess to the grid.
- ⇒ The Ministry of Home Affairs has released the National Police Station ranking. Nongpok Sekmai police station of Manipur ranked number one.
- ⇒ The Government of India has recently introduced the E20 fuel to promote green fuel such as ethanol. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways recently published a draft notification inviting comments from the public for adoption of E20 fuel. E20 means blending of 20% of Ethanol with gasoline. Currently the permissible level of blending is 10% of Ethanol in India. In 2019 in spite of the permissible level India reached only 5.6 % of blending. The National Bio-fuel Coordination Committee has allowed surplus rice that is available with the Food Corporation of India to be converted into ethanol. This shall be used to make alcohol based hand sanitizer and also in blending with the petrol.



- ⇒ CAROTAR (Customs Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020 came into force in September, 2020. These rules are set of guidelines that enforce the 'rules of origin' for imports under Free Trade Agreements. Under these rules, an importer should enter origin related information in the Bill of Entry as available in the Certificate of Origin. The rules will also bring in strict restrictions on dumping of goods by a third country. This will help India to keep a check over dumping of low-quality products by a third country, especially China.
- ⇒ The United States has again included India in its monitoring list of 'Currency Manipulation' countries. The US Government names a country as currency manipulator if it believes that the country is engaged in unfair trade practices. According to the US, India is deliberately devaluing its currency against Dollar. In simple words, the country is artificially lowering its value to gain unfair advantage over the US.
- ⇒ The Reserve Bank of India recently notified that it is to cover twenty-six stressed sectors under the TLTRO (Targeted Long-Term Repo Operations) Scheme. These twenty-six stressed sectors were identified by the KV Kamath Committee constituted by the RBI earlier. The Reserve Bank of India has directed the banks to avail funds from two schemes namely ECLGS 2.0 (Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme) and TLTRO scheme to provide credit support to the stressed sectors. Under the TLTRO scheme, the banks can invest in corporate bonds, non-convertible debentures and commercial papers issued by the entities in specific sectors.
- ⇒ Shree Cement Ltd has announced the commencement of 'Project Naman', a national initiative to provide cement free of cost to the families of the Armed Forces.
- ⇒ Angola has invited Indian companies to invest in diamond mining.
- ⇒ The TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix, an annual listing that measures the likelihood of bribe demands in 194 countries has been published. India is ranked 77th position. Denmark has the least likelihood of bribe demands, followed by Norway and Finland.
- ⇒ The RBI noticed some irregularities with the HDFC Bank with regard to certain incidents of outrage in the internet banking, mobile banking and payment utilities of the bank over the past two years. Recently the RBI advised the HDFC Bank to temporarily stop all launches of the digital businesses like selling new credit cards or launching new digital banking initiative.

Sports

- ⇒ The International Cricket Council recently announced the Men's T20I (Twenty-20 International), ODI (One Day International) and Test Teams of the decade. The teams were announced based on the consistency of the players over the period of last ten years. The former Indian Captain MS Dhoni was named as the Captain of ODI and also the Captain of T20I. Virat Kohli was announced the Skipper of ICC Test team of the Decade.
- ⇒ Virat Kohli became the fastest batsman to achieve the 12,000 ODI runs mark in his 242nd innings in the ODI match against Australia in Canberra.
- ⇒ Wisden, which is generally referred to as the 'Bible of Cricket' unveiled its all time One Day International (ODI) cricket team. Kapil Dev, the only Indian in the team, has been named as the Captain.
- ⇒ The Sports Ministry has formally recognized Yogasana as a competitive sport. This will enable the ancient practice to avail Government funding. This was done to spread awareness about Yoga and its benefits and help improve physical and mental wellbeing of the people. Yogasana has now become eligible to enter into several sports events. An International Yogasana Sports Federation was formed under the leadership of Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev. Also, Yogasana is to be inducted with Khelo India Games Programme.

Awards

- ⇒ The ICC Decade Awards –
 - * Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade – Virat Kohli
 - * Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade – Virat Kohli
 - * Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade – Steve Smith (Australia)
 - * Men's T20 Cricketer of the Decade – Rashid Khan (Afghanistan).
- ⇒ The President of the United States conferred the Legion of Merit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Prime Minister has been awarded for his steadfast leadership and vision for India's emergence as a global power.
- ⇒ Adar Poonawala, the Chief Executive of Serum Institute of India is one among the six people to be awarded with Asians of the Year. The title is being provided by the Straits Times, a Singapore daily.
- ⇒ Dr Carolina Araujo, a mathematician from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was honoured with the 2020 Ramanujan Prize for young mathematician. Dr Araujo is the first non-Indian woman mathematician to receive the prize. The Ramanujan Prize, founded by the Department of Science and Technology, is awarded annually to a researcher from a developing country.



- ⇒ Vidyut Mohan has been declared as one of the seven 'Young Companions of the Earth' by the U N Environment Programme (UNEP) for helping the world solve and address the environment challenges with their innovative ideas.

Persons

- ⇒ German Chancellor Angela Merkel is the most powerful woman in the world, according to the Forbes list. Nirmala Sitaraman, the Finance Minister of India has been ranked at the 41st position.
- ⇒ Banuk Karima Baloch was a Baloch Human Rights activist. She campaigned for the independence of Balochistan from Pakistan. Also, she appeared in the BBC list of hundred inspirational and influential women for 2016. She was found dead in Toronto, Canada recently in a mysterious condition.
- ⇒ General Paramjit Singh has been appointed first Deputy Chief of Army staff (Strategy). The Government of India sanctioned the creation of the post of Deputy Chief of Army staff (Strategy) recently.
- ⇒ Anil Soni, an Indian origin global health expert has been appointed first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the WHO Foundation.
- ⇒ Uday Shankar, the President of The Walt Disney Company Asia Pacific and Chairman of Star India and The Walt Disney Company India has taken over as the President of FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry).
- ⇒ Chetan Sharma has been appointed Chairman of the Senior National Cricket Selection Committee.
- ⇒ Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of Britain was supposed to be the Chief Guest at India's 72nd Republic Day Parade. But his visit was cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic.
- ⇒ Gitanjali Rao, a young Indian-American scientist and inventor was named Time magazine's first ever Kid of the Year. She got the honour for her ability to use technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyber bullying.

Died

- ⇒ Roddam Narasimha, the eminent aerospace scientist and Padma Vibhushan awardee passed away.
- ⇒ Kiran Maheshwari, the BJP leader and MLA from Rajsamand, Rajasthan died due to coronavirus..

Miscellaneous

- ⇒ Malayalam film "Jallikattu", directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery was nominated for 2021 Oscar (Academy Award) race.
- ⇒ Nepal and China jointly announced the revised height of the world's highest peak Mount Everest as 8844.86 metres. The new height is 86 cms more than the previous measurement.

- ⇒ The Central Zoo Authority has granted the recognition of two new zoos – Rajgir Zoo Safari in Nalanda, Bihar and Shaheed Ashfaque Ullah Khan Prani Udyaan in Gorakhpur, UP.
- ⇒ The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has signed an MoU with BYJU's to support the skilling of teachers and trainers. The partnership is a part of Skill India Mission.
- ⇒ A huge wildfire in Dzukou valley located on the Manipur-Nagaland border caused severe damage to the environment. According to the Forest Survey of India, 2020, the forests of Chhattisgarh, Mizoram Manipur, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha are most vulnerable to forest fires.
- ⇒ Around fifty crows in the Radi ke Balaji temple in Jhalawar town of Rajasthan died of bird flu, also called Avian flu recently.
- ⇒ The Union Cabinet recently approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bhutan for peaceful use of outer space. The agreement allows the countries to pursue cooperation in areas such as space science, navigation, planetary exploration, use of space system, spacecrafts and ground systems.
- ⇒ The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently approved the export of the Akash surface-to-air missile system to friendly countries.
- ⇒ The first International Day of Epidemic Preparedness was celebrated by the United Nations on December 27, 2020.
- ⇒ The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) recently established the Monpa handmade paper making unit at Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. The art of Monpa handmade paper originated in China around one thousand years ago.
- ⇒ India's first driverless train operations were initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 28, 2020. The train was operated on the Delhi Metro's 38km long Magenta Line.
- ⇒ The Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched the 100th Kisan Rail of India, which runs between Sangola in Maharashtra and Shalimar in West Bengal. The first multi-commodity service of Kisan Rail was launched in August 2020 between Devlali in Maharashtra and Danapur in Bihar.
- ⇒ Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the Thoubal Multipurpose project on the river Thoubal, a tributary of Manipur river in Imphal, the capital of Manipur.
- ⇒ Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that the history of Sikh Gurus is to be included in the school curriculum of Uttar Pradesh. The announcement was made during the celebrations of 'Sahibzada Diwas' on December 27, which marks the martyrdom of four 'Sahibzadas' of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Gujri.



- ⇒ The Forest Minister of Madhya Pradesh recently launched the first hot air balloon safari of India in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in MP. There are several hot air balloon rides in the country. However, this is the first hot air balloon safari.
- ⇒ The World Health Organisation recently announced that a new strain of Corona Virus has been detected in eight European countries. The new strain is spreading rapidly among the younger groups unlike the previous strain. This mutant was first discovered in UK. According to experts, this mutant transmitted at faster rates as compared to the normal COVID-19 virus. It was named the 'A4 variant'. The new COVID-19 virus has been named Variant of Concern, VOC-2020 12/01.
- ⇒ The first Lithium refinery of India is to be set up in Gujarat. Manikaran Power Limited, one of the largest power trading and renewable energy companies is to invest Rs 1000 crore to set up the refinery. The lithium ore for the refinery is to be imported from Australia. Lithium is a rare element and is not found in India. India gained access to the Bolivian Lithium reserves very recently. India has set an ambitious goal of increasing the Electric Vehicle numbers to 30% by 2030. However, India is importing all the lithium required to make lithium-ion batteries. India is currently dependent on China, Japan and Taiwan for its electrical batteries as lithium in India is highly expensive.
- ⇒ The Assam Cabinet recently approved the bill to make Bodo an official language of the state. It is to be noted that there is no National language in India. The article 343 says that the official language of the Union shall be Hindi and English.
- ⇒⇒ India recently added the Tso Kar Wetland Complex as its 42nd Ramsar site. This is the second Ramsar site in the Union Territory of Ladakh. (A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. Ramsar is a town in Iran. The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO.)
- ⇒ DigiBoxx, an Indian data storage and management platform has been launched by the NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. DigiBoxx is a file sharing and cloud storage platform. It was announced a few weeks after Google had announced that it would not offer unlimited free photo uploads after June 1, 2021. DigiBoxx provides 20 GB of free cloud storage and 100 GB free space per month. It charges only 30 rupees per month for such a large storage. DigiBoxx is the first in its kind under 'Make in India, Store in India' policy of India.
- ⇒ The Japanese Embassy recently released the first glimpse of Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project. The E5 Series Shinkansen trains are to be used to implement the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project. It is a 508-kilometre project. E5 Series Shinkansen is a high-speed train operated by the East Japan Railway Company. The speed of the train is 320 km/hour. However, it is capable of achieving the speed of 400 km/hr.
- ⇒ On December 21, 2020 the world witnessed a rare celestial event, the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, which is called as 'Great Conjunction'.
- ⇒ Every year on December 16 India celebrates Vijay Diwas to commemorate its victory over Pakistan during the 1971 war. The year 2021 marks 50 years of India's victory over Pakistan in that war. India has planned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its victory as Golden victory year, that is, Swarnim Vijay Varsh.
- ⇒ The State Legislature of Maharashtra recently passed proposals stating that they will not reply to any notice sent by the Supreme Court or High Court in the breach of privilege motion against the Republic TV editor Arnab Goswami. According to the Maharashtra government replying to such notices would mean that Judiciary can keep a check on legislature. This is inconsistent with the basic structure of the constitution. (The Members of Parliament are granted certain privileges individually and collectively so as to perform their duties properly. But if any of the members disregards or misuses any of the privileges or rights, it is considered as a breach of the privilege motion and is liable for punishment under the Parliamentary laws).
- ⇒ The Western Railway has recently scrapped the 107-year-old Billimora Waghai Line, a narrow gauge railway line in Gujarat. The line was started by the Gaekwad Dynasty which ruled the Princely State of Baroda in 1913. It was laid by the British and operated by Gaekwad Baroda State Railway owned by Sayajirao Gaekwad III. The Union Cabinet recently approved revised guidelines for Direct to Home (DTH) broadcasting services. The guidelines allow 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in DTH. Also, it has increased the license period to twenty years. Earlier, it was ten years.
- ⇒ Project Loon, a subsidiary of Google recently announced that its balloons have successfully stayed in the stratosphere for almost a year. The balloons are helium filled and cover a distance of 2.1 lakh kilometres. Project Loon aims to provide internet connectivity to the remote parts of the world. Loon has created a new record for the longest stratospheric flight by staying in air for 312 days.



- ⇒ The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan Mohan Reddy recently launched the YSR free Crop Insurance Scheme. Under the scheme 1,252 crores of rupees have been credited into the bank accounts of 9.48 lacs of farmers as crop insurance.
- ⇒ The first Maritime Theatre Command (MTC) of India is to be launched in 2021. The MTC will look after the 7,516-km long coastline, the entire Indian Ocean Region and the 1,382 islands. This is important to counter Chinese ever-expanding naval foot-print in the Indian Ocean Region. The main objective of the Maritime Theatre Command is to integrate the assets of Indian Air Force, Indian Navy and Army and the Coast Guard.
- ⇒ The National Centre for Divyang Empowerment (NCDE) was established by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to re-skill and rehabilitate Divyang warriors of the force suffering from disability that occurred in line of duty. The Centre is located at the CRPF Group Centre at Rangareddy, Telangana.
- ⇒ The Indian Embassy in Beijing launched a movie series 'CinemaSCOpe' exclusively for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) countries. The embassy will be screening more than two dozen Indian movies dubbed in Russian language on monthly basis.
- ⇒ The Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the Koilwar Bridge over the Sone River in Bihar. It is a major link between Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- ⇒ BSNL in partnership with the Skylo announced the world's first satellite based Narrow Band Internet of Things network in India. This is to bring a breakthrough in satellite based narrowband internet of things technology. It will also help in achieving the targets of Digital India mission helping farmers, fishermen, mining, construction and Logistic Enterprises in India.
- ⇒ The Union Territory of Lakshadweep has been declared as Organic Agricultural Area by the Ministry of Agriculture. The UT is second after Sikkim to achieve the status of 100% organic region. It is the first in the Union Territories of India to achieve the status.
- ⇒ The Indian Railways is to use LiDAR technique to conduct ground survey for the Delhi Varanasi High Speed Rail corridor. LiDAR is Light Detection and Ranging technique. This is being done after its success in the Mumbai Ahmedabad bullet train project for the first time. The technique uses a combination of GPS data, laser data and flight parameters to give an accurate survey.
- ⇒ The Supreme Court recently asked the committee monitoring the Char Dham Highway project to consider the applications from Defence Ministry. The Defence Ministry in its application sought to widen roads up to seven metres in the Indo China border area. In September 2020, the Supreme Court had asked the Road Transport and Highways Ministry to stick to 5.5 metre carriageway width. According to the Ministry of Defence, a carriage-way of seven metres width is essential to facilitate the transport of heavy vehicles, troops, tanks, armaments and artillery.
- ⇒ The Varanasi Annapurna idol is being brought back to India after a century from Canada. It was stolen from a Varanasi temple about a century ago. This 18th century sculpture is carved in the 'Benares style' and is a representation of the goddess of food. Annapurna is also the deity of Varanasi city.
- ⇒ The Theremin musical instrument has turned hundred years old in 2020. It has revolutionised the music industry by being the predecessor of the modern synthesizer. It is considered as the world's first electronic instrument which was developed by Leon Theremin.
- ⇒ The Indian Oil Corporation recently launched the first 100 Octane petrol. This is the first time 100 Octane fuel is being launched in the country. The fuel was manufactured in the Indian Oil Corporation Mathura Refinery located in Uttar Pradesh. The 100 Octane petrol is usually used in luxury vehicles that demand high-performance. It is also used in racing vehicles.
- ⇒ Mount Semeru, an active volcano located in East Java, Indonesia recently erupted. Indonesia has more than 130 active volcanoes, more than any other country.
- ⇒ The Hornbill Festival, which is called the 'Festivals of Festivals', is a 10-day annual cultural fest of Nagaland. It showcases the rich and diverse Naga ethnicity through folk dances, traditional music, local cuisine, handicraft, art workshops etc. The 21st edition of this festival was celebrated digitally from December 1 to 5 amid the coronavirus concerns. The start of this festival (December 1) marks the Nagaland statehood day.
- ⇒ In 2000, the National Green Tribunal banned the cultivation of Thai Mangur (fish) in India as it was harming the local ecosystem and the consumers' health. It is favoured by the cultivators due to its ability to feed on anything and survive in hostile conditions. It also has high demand because it is cheaper when compared to other seafood. Recently, thousands of tons of this banned catfish were found to be illegally bred in over 125 artificial ponds in rural Thane, Maharashtra.



EXCELLENT TUTORIAL

Jadavpur : 9433267091, 033-24187224. Site : www.excellenttutorial.in

- ⇒ Parts of Tripura are witnessing violent protest recently due to the proposed resettlement of Bru tribes. Bru or Reang tribe is an indigenous community in the northeast, living in the states of Tripura, Assam and Mizoram. In Tripura, this community is recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. In a bid to ensure their permanent settlement in Tripura, an agreement was signed between the Centre and the two states this year. This sparked protests from Bengalis and Mizo groups in Tripura.
- ⇒ India recently summoned the Canadian High Commissioner to convey him that the comments made by the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the farmers' agitation in India is an unacceptable interference in internal affairs of the country.
- ⇒ The Kilauea Volcano in Hawaii's Big Island recently erupted after an Earthquake that struck the region.
- ⇒ The India Meteorological Department inaugurated India's highest meteorological centre at Leh in Ladakh.

Books & Authors

- ⇒ The Patient Assassin : A True Tale of Massacre, Revenge and the Raj – Anita Anand.
- ⇒ Pioneer of Humanity : Maharshi Arvind – Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank (Union Education Minister).
- ⇒ The City and the Sea – Raj Kamal Jha (Winner of the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize, 2020).
- ⇒ The Pursuit of Justice : An Autobiography – Justice Rajindar Sachar.
