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CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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International

Cuba:



Cuba, officially the Republic of Cuba, is a country comprising the island of Cuba as well as Isla de la Juventud and several minor archipelagos. Cuba is located in the northern Caribbean where the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean meet. Its capital city is Havana.

Manuel Marrero Cruz: He has been appointed as Cuba's first PM in more than 40 years. He was appointed by the Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel.

He served as tourism minister from 2004, late in revolutionary hero Fidel Castro's administration, continuing in the post under Fidel's brother Raul and the current president, Diaz-Canel. His appointment as the head of government is part of a process of decentralization and generational change from the revolutionary old guard which is aimed at extending and protecting Communist Party rule.

The ECO:



It is the name of the new common currency. Recently, 8 West African nations have agreed to change the name of their common currency from 'CFA franc' to 'Eco' and severed their earlier currency CFA Franc's links to former colonial ruler France. The 8 African countries are nations- Ivory Coast, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Guinea-Bissau. All these countries, except Guinea-Bissau, are former French colonies. The announcement was

made during the visit by Emmanuel Macron (French President) to Ivory Coast on 21st December 2019. Eco usage will come in to force in 2020. This decision was taken after Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had urged members to make efforts to establish a common currency.

According to the President of Ivory Coast the changing of the name of the currency will stop any interference of France in relation to the currency of these countries.

Prior to this, all of these nations used 'CFA franc' as their currency. The CFA Franc was initially pegged to the French franc and has been linked to the euro for about two decades.

CFA Franc: It is the name of two currencies, the West African CFA franc, used in eight West African countries, and the Central African CFA franc, used in six Central African countries. Both currencies are guaranteed by the French treasury. The currency was created in 1945 and was seen as sign of interference in its former African colonies even after these countries became independent.

Space Force:



It is described as the world's newest war-fighting domain. The launch of the Space Force is the first in more than 70 years. The new military service falls under the US Air Force. It will be funded by an initial 40million Dollar for its first year. It was created in August to handle the US military's space operations. It would comprise of around 16,000 Air Force and civilian personnel. The

Space Force will be administered by Secretary of Air Force.

US President Donald trump officially launched the new US military service' Space Force' at an army base near Washington. The US president said that amid grave threats to the national security of the country, American superiority in space was absolutely vital. The Space Force would help in deterring aggression and controlling the ultimate high ground.

The function of the Space Force is not to put troops into orbit but to protect the US assets such as the hundreds of satellites used for communication and surveillance.

WEF:



It refers to the World Economic Forum. The WEF is an international organization headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland that brings together its membership on a yearly basis to discuss major issues concerning the world political economy.

3000 Global Leaders are scheduled to meet at 50th World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Switzerland's Davos. The event will be held from January 21 to 24 next year. The Geneva-based WEF has selected "stakeholders for a cohesive and sustainable world" as the theme of the meeting. The event is expected to have huge expectations as the UN Global Climate Summit failed to meet the required.

The meet is to be attended by the global leaders from all over the world. It includes Russian President Putin, US President Trump and other leaders of top polluters. However, China, which is one of the top 5 polluters of the world, is to skip the event.

The leaders of countries who are to attend the meeting include India, Norway, Iraq, Switzerland, and Afghanistan among others. Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Mansukh Mandaivya, ministers and the chief ministers or 3 states along with 100 CEOs will attend the event from India.

Even though the WEF meet does not focus on climate, it will make key decisions considering climate change as one of the factors.



National

India-Swiss air service pact:



The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the 'Signing of Protocol' to amend the Air Services Agreement between Swiss Federal Council of Switzerland and Indian Government related to air services and to exchange diplomatic notes with Switzerland for bringing the amendments in the air services agreement into force.

The protocol will allow more number of airlines to start flight operations between two countries. Till now only 2 airlines were permitted.

The amendments in the air serviced agreement will enable the designated airlines of India and Switzerland freely to decide reasonable tariff without resorting to anti-competitive and predatory behavior. The agreement also notifies the number of destinations in each country to which flight operations can be conducted by other country's airline. As per the agreement designated airline(s) may also use aircraft leased from other company or airline(s), but lesser not to exercise the rights it doesn't have.

However, before a country's airline can operate international flights, a bilateral air services agreement has to be negotiated for deciding as to how many total flights (or seats) each week can be allowed from one nation to another.

The amendment seeks to provide enabling environment for enhanced as well as seamless connectivity and to bring it in tune with developments in civil aviation sector. It will also provide commercial opportunities to carriers of both sides ensuring greater safety and security.

India-China Border Dispute:



The India-China border dispute covers 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC). China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet, something India fiercely contests.

The Indian and Chinese representatives met in New Delhi for the 22nd time to discuss the border issued between both the countries. The Chinese delegation was led by its Foreign Minister Wang Yi, while National Security Advisor Ajit Doval represented the Indian side. Both the countries agreed to intensify their efforts for an early settlement of the boundary dispute. Also, the countries recognized the importance of improving the level of military and security exchanges and cooperation.

This is the first meeting of the representatives of both India and China since the second informal summit that was held in Chennai between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping.

National Farmers Day:

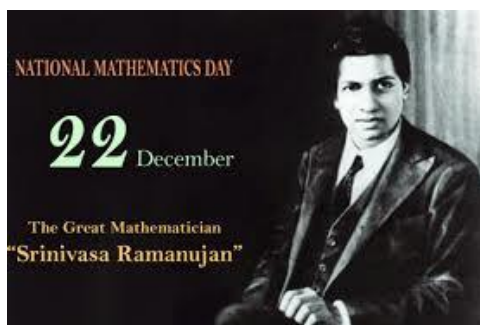


National farmers Day or the Kisan Divas observed every year in India on the 23rd of December to commemorate the birth anniversary of the 5th Prime Minister of India, Choudhary Charan Singh. It was decided by the government of India to celebrate Farmers Day in 2001. It is believed that 'Zamindari Abolition Bill-1952' was passed due to Chaudhary Charan Singh's hard work. The government organizes many programs and debates, seminars on agriculture on this day. the day seeks to

promote awareness among the citizens to understand the importance of the contributions of the farmers to the society. Farmers are considered to be the backbone of India's economic development as more than 40% of the total employment in India, is employed in the Agricultural sector. The day is widely celebrated in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

Chaudhary Charan Singh: He served as the Prime Minister of India between 28 July 1979 and 14 January 1980. He is often referred to as the 'champion of India's peasants or the leader of the Indian farmers. He was born on 23 December 1902 in a rural peasant Jat family. He entered into politics during the Independence Movement motivated by Gandhiji and he served as a member of Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces elected in 1937. In the post-independence period, he was one of three principal leaders of Congress from Uttar Pradesh. He left the Congress in 1967 and became the first non-Congress chief minister of UP. He passed away in 1987. His memorial in New Delhi is named as Kisan Ghat. Books like the Abolition of Zamindari, India's Poverty and Its Solutions and the Legend Proprietorship were written by him. He introduced many policies to improve the lives of Indian farmers. The National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) was established during his reign.

National Mathematics Day:



The day is observed on 22 December every year to mark the birth anniversary of legendary self-taught Indian mathematician, Srinivasa Ramanujan for his contributions in the field of mathematics. The Union Government headed by the former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh declared 22nd December as the National Mathematical Day on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of the great mathematician Srinivasa Iyengar Ramanujan in

Chennai in the year 2012. The Indian government had also declared 2012 as the National Mathematical year. The day was celebrated across the country for the first time. The day aims to raise awareness among people about the importance of mathematics for the development of humanity.

Srinivasa Ramanujan: He was born on December 22, 1887, into a Tamil brahmin Iyenger family in Erode, Madras Presidency. He was an Indian mathematician who lived during the British Rule in India. Though he had almost no formal training in pure mathematics, he made substantial contributions to mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series, and continued fractions, including solutions to mathematical problems then considered unsolvable. His ideas continue to shape mathematics of the 21st century. He is also known for the Hardy-Ramanujan number- '1729', which is the smallest number which can be represented as sum of two different cubes in two different ways. The number was discovered by both Ramanujan and British mathematician G.H. Hardy.

India celebrated his 131st birth anniversary this year. The theme of the workshop this year was- Indian Contribution during Vedic Period Indian Contribution during Classical period Indian Contribution during the medieval period.

National Consumer Day:



It is observed every year on the 24th of December in India. It is observed on this day because the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted on this day. The objective of celebrating this day is to make the consumers aware about their rights and responsibilities. The theme this year for National Consumer Day is 'Alternate consumer grievance/dispute redressal'.

Indian polity

Union Cabinet:



The Union Cabinet approved the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY) on December 24, 2019. It is a Central Sector Scheme which has a total outlay of 6,000 cr rupees for sustainable management of ground water resources. This scheme is being implemented in identified states like – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. These states have been selected according to the level of groundwater exploitation and degradation.

ABY: It refers to Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal). The scheme aims to promote active participation of the communities in various activities such as formation of water user associations, monitoring and disseminating ground water data, water budgeting, preparation and implementation of gram panchayat-wise water security plans and information, education and communication (IEC) activities related to sustainable ground water management.

Indian Railways:



It is one of the world's largest railway network consists of freight, passengers, tourist, Suburban rail systems, toy train and luxury trains. IR has 4,337 operating railway stations, operates on a multi-gauge network of broad, meter and narrow gauges. It was founded on 16 April 1853.

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a transformational organisational restructuring of the Indian Railways. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a transformational organizational restructuring of the Indian Railways. This historic reform seeks to go a long way in achieving Government's vision of making Indian Railways the growth engine of India's vikas yatra.

The reforms include the unification of eight Group A services of the Railways into a Central Service called Indian Railway Management Service (/RMS). It is expected to end departmentalism, promote smooth working and expedite decision-making. Railway Board will be headed by Chairman Railway Board (CRB). The re-organized board will have one Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and four members along with a few independent members.

Assam Cabinet:



The Assam Cabinet has approved to make Assamese language the state language of Assam. This will exclude BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Administrative Districts), Barak Valley and Hill districts of Assam. Assamese language will be made compulsory in all the school of Assam too. The cabinet proposal targets at fulfilling the demands of the Assamese speaking majority in the Brahmaputra Valley in the wake of rising insecurities among the people after the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) was passed in both Houses of the Parliament earlier this month.

Article 345: Article 345 of the Indian Constitution says that subject to provisions of Article 346 and 347, the State Legislature might adopt one or more languages to be used as official languages.

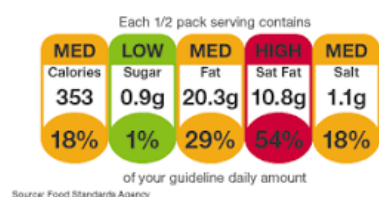
Article 346: As per Article 346, the states are authorized to decide on the language of communications amongst them after the approval of the Central Government.

Article 347: Under this article, special provisions are provided to language spoken in a section of population. The President of India shall assent on the usage of the language if he sees it is necessary.

The state cabinet also decided to bring a new bill securing the land rights for the indigenous people. As per the new bill, only indigenous people could sell or buy land from another indigenous citizen.

Indian policy News

FoPL:



It stands for Front Of Packet Labeling. It refers to symbols and rating systems, including shelf-tag labels, which are designed to summarize the key nutritional characteristics of food products. Front-of-package labels have been proposed as an approach to help consumers make healthier food choices at the point of purchase. It is also an important policy tool for countries to help

consumers to make healthier food choices. India for the first time included FoPL within the draft for Food Safety and Standards (Labeling and Display Regulations), 2019. FoPL seeks to make consumers aware about products that are high in sugar, fat and salt content. It consists of two aspects namely-threshold limit and the way the limit is depicted on packets of processed food. The thresholds are based on World Health Organization norms developed after years of deliberations for countries like India. Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive of Food Safety Standards Association of India (FSSAI) which is the country's apex food regulatory has announced that the front of packet labeling will be delinked from its general labeling regulation.

Delinking: It means cutting off or breaking the connection. The decision of delinking the FoPL from labeling regulations was made because the thresholds that the companies follow were not up to Indian Standards. As per the report of Centre for Science and Environment- the 33 foods, 19 fast foods, four different types of wrapped sandwiches, fried chicken, pizza which was tested showed

high content of salt and fat in the food items. FASSAI will now set a new threshold for FoPL which needs to be defined across the food categories.

BCPL:



It refers to Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited. It is a central public sector undertaking. It is implementing the Assam Gas Cracker Project, which is seen as part of the implementation of the Assam peace accord signed on 15 August 1985, with a view to bring socioeconomic development of region and would also give impetus to the development of the northeastern region.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the transfer of administrative control of Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer (BCPL), the Central Public Sector Undertaking implementing the Assam Gas Cracker Project (AGCP) from Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals to Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MOP&NG).

CCS:



It refers to Chief of Defense Staff. The CCS chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the creation of a Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) post that will function as a single point of contact for different branches of armed forces and as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defense Minister on tri-service matters. A report by a high-level committee headed by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, which finalized responsibilities and framework for operation of CDS has also been approved by the CCS. Bipin Rawat at

present is the Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee (CSC) is Chief of Army Staff (CoAS). However, he does not function in capacity of a CDS. The government is likely to appoint the country's first CDS in the next few days

CDS: It refers to Chief of Defence Staff. The cabinet has approved the creation of the post of chief of defence staff. The CDS will be a four-star general who maybe from the Army, the Air Force or the Navy. His salary will be equal to that of the service chief. CDS will head the department of military affairs. The department will be created under Defense Ministry. Described as 'first among equals' among service chiefs, the CDS will be tasked with trimming weapons procurement procedures and integrating operation of the armed forces. It will also serve as the unified military advisor to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense.

The CDS will not exercise any military command over the three service chiefs. The post will have a fixed term that has yet to be determined. All P-5 nations - the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - have equivalent posts.

Kargil Review Committee: It is a committee that was set up after Kargil War (1999), to examine lapses in security after war, in which Pakistani soldiers infiltrated into India, occupied key positions in Kargil Mountains and triggered the war. CDS to oversee military was first recommended by the Kargil

Review Committee. In a landmark military reform, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15 announced from the Red Fort that India would have a CDS as head of the tri-services.

Good Governance Day:



It is observed on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. On the occasion of the Good Governance Day, Dr. Jitendra Singh launched the Good Governance Index (GGI) at the event organized by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.

GGI: It refers to Good Governance Index. It is a scientifically designed uniform tool across states to assess the status of governance and impact of various interventions and union territories. GGI seeks to provide a reference threshold for future documentation of good governance index. The other objectives of the GGI is also to give quantifiable data, to compare the state of governance in all states and UTs, enable them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance & shift to result-oriented approaches. The ten sectors that the GGI considers are- Agriculture and Allied Sectors, Commerce & Industries, Human Resource Development, Public Health, Public Infrastructure & Utilities, Economic Governance, Social Welfare & Development, Judicial & Public Security, Environment and Citizen-Centric Governance. The states and UTs are divided into three groups: a). Big States, b). North-East & Hill States and c). UTs.

Tamil Nadu topped in Good Governance Index in the “Big States” category, Himachal Pradesh ranked first in the North East and hill states category, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Daman and Diu ranked first in the agricultural ranking and Delhi, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand ranked first under the category of commerce and industries.

Science and Technology

DRDO:



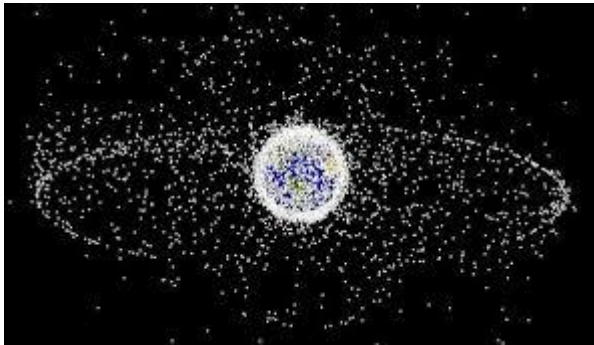
It refers to the Defense Research Development Organization. The DRDO is an agency of the Government of India, charged with the military's research and development, headquartered in New Delhi, India. It was founded in 1958.

The Defense Research Development Organization (DRDO) test fired the Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM) successfully. The test fire was conducted on 23 December 2019 at the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur, off the Odisha coast. The QRSAM was flight-tested with full configuration in deployment mode intercepting the target mid-air, meeting the mission objectives. The entire event

was monitored by Ground Telemetry Systems, Range Radar Systems and Electro Optical Tracking System.

QRSAM: Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile System (QRSAM) is a Short Range Surface to Air Missile system designed to protect moving armored columns from aerial attacks. The entire weapon system is configured on highly mobile platforms and is capable of providing air defense on the move. It was developed by DRDO along with Bharat Electronics Limited for the Indian Army.

New Laser Technology:



scientists in China have developed a new laser technology that is the 'space junk identification system' that can measure the space junk accurately. The researchers found a new way of using lasers to find space junk in a way similar to how bats use echolocation to track their prey. A unique set of algorithms for the laser ranging telescopes has improved the success rate of space debris detection. Laser ranging technique

uses laser reflection from the objects to measure their distance. However, it has proved tricky to exactly pinpoint the swift, small specks of space Junk.

Space Junk: Earth is surrounded by space junk. This junk is formed from fragments of old satellites to exploded spacecraft. The clutter is a potential hazard for current and future spaceflight. Even small pieces of space junk can damage satellites and spacecraft as they whiz around Earth at up to about 17,500 mph. According to NASA uncountable debris is as small as a marble while millions are too small to be traced and some are just paint flecks from spacecraft. Even these very tiny particles have caused damage to the windows of the International Space Station.

Annular eclipse:



An annular solar eclipse happens when the Moon covers the Sun's center, leaving the Sun's visible outer edges to form a "ring of fire" or annulus around the Moon. The ring of fire marks the maximum stage of an annular solar eclipse.

The annular solar eclipse occurred in 26 December 2019. The eclipse was witnessed by thousands of people, including children and the aged, especially in northern districts of Kerala, while in some places, due to the clouds, it was not visible. The rare spectacle was first visible at Cheruvathur in Kasaragod, in the state followed by places in Kozhikode and Kannur.

Hundreds of devotees also reached the Ganga Ghat in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi for a holy dip in the river and offered special prayers on the occasion of solar eclipse.

Russia:



Russia, officially the Russian Federation, is a transcontinental country in Eastern Europe and North Asia. Its Capital is Moscow. The currency used there is Russian ruble. The President of Russia is Vladimir Putin.

Russia has deployed its 'world's first' unstoppable hypersonic nuclear weapon. Russia's defense ministry stated that a new hypersonic weapon with latest strategic missiles of intercontinental range has become operational.

Avangard Hypersonic missile system: It is Russia's first missile unit equipped with Avangard Hypersonic glide vehicle. It can carry a nuclear weapon of up to 2 megatons. It is designed using new composite materials to withstand temperatures of up to 2,000 Celsius resulting from a flight through the atmosphere at hypersonic speeds. The Avangard is 'invulnerable to interception' and can travel at 27 times the speed of sound, before unleashing a two megaton blast more than 100 times as powerful as the bomb which wiped out Hiroshima.

China:



China, officially the People's Republic of China, is a country in East Asia and is the world's most populous country. Its capital is Beijing. The currency used there is Renminbi. The President of China is Xi Jinping.

China has successfully launched its largest carrier rocket "Long March-5" carrying the Shijian-20 satellite. The rocket was launched from Wenchang Space Launch Center (WSLC) in south China's Hainan Province. The rocket is also known as CZ-5. It was China's third attempt to launch the rocket.

The Shijian-20 satellite is a communication satellite and it was placed into its designated orbit. The satellite will lay the foundation for the development of highly sensitive space probes. It is China's heaviest and most advanced communications satellite in geosynchronous orbit.

Environment & Climate News

Kevadia:



It is a place in Gujarat where the Ministry's Environment Education Division & GEER (Gujarat Ecological Education and Research) Foundation, have jointly organized the 1st Annual Meet of the State Nodal Agencies implementing the National Green Corps (NGC) 'Ecoclub' programme of the Ministry of the Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in Kevadia, Gujarat.

The book 'Glimpses of Ecoclubs', a handbook on International Environment Conventions and Programmes & Handbook on Important Days of Environmental significance was also released at the event. Best Ecoclub Award at National level was also awarded to the students of the Ecoclub from Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Telangana who bagged 1st, 2nd and 3rd spot respectively for their contribution in waste management, resource management, water conservation, biodiversity conservation

NGC: It refers to National Green Corps programme that is a sub part of Environment Education Awareness and Training (EEAT) which is a central sector scheme of the Ministry of the Environment continuing since 1983-84.

It was started in 2001-02 by the Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change. The main objective of the programme is to provide opportunities for children to understand the environment and environmental problems through school eco-clubs.

MoEFCC: It refers to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. It was established 1985. It's headquarters is in New Delhi.

Equador oil spill:



Ecuador activated emergency protocols in the Galapagos Islands to contain the environmental impact of a fuel spill in the Galapagos Islands. This step was taken to reduce the environmental risk after a barge carrying 600 gallons of diesel fuel sank. The accident occurred in a port on San Cristobal Island, the easternmost island in the chain when the crane loading a container onto the barge

collapsed and fell destabilizing the ship and caused it to sink.

The Galapagos archipelago is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is home to one of the most fragile ecosystems on the planet.

Buccinatormyia gangnami:



It is a name given to a fossilized insect. It is about 110 million years. It looks a lot like a modern wasp or hoverfly. It has a black and yellow 'yellowjacket' pattern and is twice as large as a common house fly.

Russian and South Korean paleontologists discovered 110 million years old 'Gangnam style' fly in Jinju City, South Korea. The discovery of this new species of extinct

pollinating flies, which lived during the first half of the Cretaceous period, about 110 million years ago, when the angiosperm radiation occurred, has been named as the "Gangnam style" fly as the flies resemble the steps of the popular song. The researchers have deduced from the length of its proboscis that these insects were nectar feeders and probably fed on the world's first flowers.

Groundwater :



Groundwater is defined as water that is found beneath the surface of the Earth in conditions of 100% saturation (if it is less than 100 percent saturation, then the water is considered soil moisture). It represents 99 percent of Earth's available fresh water.

Groundwater Depletion: More than 1,100 scientists, practitioners and experts in ground water and related fields from 92 countries across the world have petitioned and asked the authorities and non-government agencies to act immediately in order to ensure global groundwater sustainability. As 99% of the Earth's freshwater is groundwater, it is being polluted or the level is depleted in many regions. This can cause a huge impact in the future. So it was time for action to make efforts to save the groundwater.

Locusts:



Locusts are a collection of certain species of short-horned grasshoppers in the family Acrididae that have a swarming phase. These insects are usually solitary, but under certain circumstances they become more abundant and change their behavior and habits, becoming gregarious. Locust swarms devastate crops and cause major agricultural damage causing human misery, famine and starvation. They occur in many parts of the world, but today locusts are most

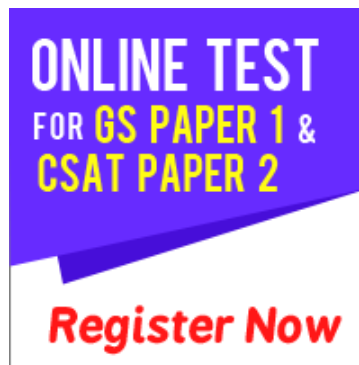
destructive in sustenance farming regions of Africa. They are migratory insects.

Locust Invasion: The locusts, locally known as Tiddis have swarmed the northern parts of Gujarat. It has destroyed standing crops of castor, cumin, jatropha, cotton, and potato, and fodder grass in around 20 talukas. Gujarat witnessed such an invasion of locusts after 1993-94. The insects were flying from Pakistan's Sindh province and spread in the villages of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had issued an alert of a massive locust attack in South Asia covering Pakistan and India. The Locust Warning Organization (LWO) in Jodhpur had also predicted their trajectory across the international border beforehand.

The locusts emerged from Sudan and Eritrea in Africa's Red Sea Coast and travelled through Saudi Arabia and Iran to enter Pakistan. They invaded the Sindh Province in Pakistan and moved towards Gujarat and Rajasthan.

FAO: It refers to UN Food and Agriculture Organization. It is headquartered in Rome. It operates the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS). It monitors desert locusts all over the world and provides information about locust situation. It even prepares publication and training against such invasion.

LWO: It refers to Locust Warning Organization. It was established in 1939. It is headquartered in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. It operates under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Its responsibility is to monitor and the controlling of the locust situation in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and partly in Punjab and Haryana.



Sports News

Weightlifting:



Olympic weightlifting, or Olympic-style weightlifting, often simply referred to as weightlifting, is a sport in which the athlete attempts a maximum-weight single lift of a barbell loaded with weight plates. The two competition lifts in order are the snatch and the clean and jerk.

Rakhi Halder: She is an Indian Weight lifter who has created two new national records. She clinched a bronze medal in the women's 64kg weight category at the Qatar International Cup in Doha. The Commonwealth Championship gold medalist obliterated the senior national record in both snatch and total lift with her personal best effort of 218kg (95kg in snatch + 123 kg in clean and jerk). Halder had clinched the gold with a combined effort of 214kg (94kg+120kg) at the Commonwealth Championship in June.

India ended the Olympic qualifying silver level event with three medals. Former world champion Mirabai Chanu had won the gold on the opening day while teenager Jeremy Lalrinnunga had claimed silver in a power-packed performance.

A weightlifter, to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics, must compete in at least six tournaments within three six-month periods (November 2018 to April 2020). Apart from this, the player has to participate in at least six events and in at least one gold and one silver-level event.

Wisden Cricketers' Almanack:



It is the most famous sports book in the world, the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack has been published every year since 1864. Wisden 2019 contains coverage of first-class cricket all round the world, and reports on all Test matches, ODIs and T20 internationals. It is based in London, England.

Virat Kohli: He was named as the Wisden cricketers of the decade and also as the captain of the Wisden Test team of the decade. He is only the other Indian to feature in the list which includes Ravichandran Ashwin. Apart from Virat Kohli four other cricketers-Steve Smith and women's all-rounder Ellyse Perry from Australia, Dale Steyn and AB de Villiers from South Africa also found their place in the list.

ICC:



It refers to the International Cricket Council. ICC recently released the ICC One Day International (ODI) rankings for batsmen.

Virat Kohli is on number one position while Rohit Sharma is number two ODI player. Rohit Sharma broke a 22-year-old record of Sanath Jayasuriya for most runs in a calendar by an opener.

ITF World Champions for 2019: The International Tennis Federation (ITF) has announced that Australia's Ashleigh Barty and Rafael Nadal of Spain have been named 2019 ITF World Champions. Ashleigh Barty and Rafael Nadal were named International Tennis Federation's (ITF) World Champions in singles for 2019.

Barty is the first Australian to be named ITF Women's World Champion having become the first Australian woman to reach No.1 in the world rankings since Evonne Goolagong Cawley in 1976. She claimed her first Grand Slam title at Roland Garros. She lifted the trophy at the WTA Finals in Shenzhen and led Australia to their first Fed Cup by BNP Paribas final since 1993.

The other winners are:-

Timea Babos (Hungary) and Kristina Mladenovic (France) in Women Doubles

Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah (Colombia) in Men Doubles

Gustavo Fernandez (Argentina) in Men's Wheelchair

Diede de Groot (Netherlands) in Women's Wheelchair

Dylan Alcott (Australia) in Quad

This awards will be presented at the 2020 ITF world champions 2nd June, in Paris.

Leander Paes:



Leander Adrian Paes is an Indian professional tennis player. He has won 8 doubles and 10 mixed doubles Grand Slam titles. He holds a career Grand Slam in men's doubles and mixed doubles, and has achieved the rare men's doubles/mixed doubles double at the 1999 Wimbledon tournament.

The Indian tennis icon Leander Paes announced that 2020 will be his farewell year on the Pro-Circuit, bringing down his nearly 3-decade-long professional career in 2020. The 46-year-old has hundreds of trophies including 18 coveted Grand Slam doubles titles.

Economic News

ADB:



It refers to Asian Development Bank. ADB and Government of India signed a 490 million dollars loan for public-private partnership (PPP) project to upgrade about 2600 kilometers of state highways and major district roads from single-lane to two-lane widths in Madhya Pradesh. The loan agreement was signed by the Additional Secretary (Fund Bank and ADB) in Department of Economic Affairs in Finance Ministry Sameer Kumar Khare and Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission Kenichi Yokoyama. An additional \$286 million investment will also be mobilized via private sector participation under PPP modality.

The project aims to improve rural and peri-urban connectivity in state as well as improve access to markets and better services. It will also develop an e-maintenance system, which can record defects or required maintenance, along with a training program to develop capacity on contract implementation and project finance in the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation.

The project continues ADB's engagement with the state's road sector since 2002. This will open a new partnership by introducing PPP through the hybrid-annuity model (HAM), thereby leveraging government financing and improving sustainability of capital investments.

HAM: It refers to hybrid-annuity model. The HAM is a mix of engineering, procurement, construction, and build-operate-transfer. This passes the responsibility of design, implementation, and operation and maintenance obligations to the private sector, while attracting some private sector financing.

Under the HAM, the government will release 60% of the total project cost during construction, to be paid to the concessionaire in tranches linked to completion milestones. The remaining 40% is arranged by the concessionaire in the form of equity and commercial debt. After the completion of the project, the government will repay concessionaire's financial investment over a period of 10 years.

MSME:



It refers to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Bank of Baroda signed an MoU with the Gujarat government to facilitate the flow of credit in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector. According to the agreement, the credit will be provided to the MSME sector for greenfield projects, startups, women entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs from backward areas under the Gujarat Single Window Clearance Act 2017 & Ordinance Number 1 of 2019 dated October 24, 2019. The MoU with the Gujarat government is a step forward for MSME entrepreneurs. The MoU would not only speed up the process of the credit off take but also speed up industrial development.

HDFC Bank:



HDFC Bank Ltd. is an Indian banking and financial services company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra. It is India's largest private sector lender by assets. It is the largest bank in India by market capitalization as of February 2016. It was founded in August 1994 in India.

HDFC Bank has become only the third Indian company to cross \$100 billion in market capitalization. It now a rank 110th in the list of world's most valued firms and is now in league of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), which has a market value of \$140.74 billion, and Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (TCS) that has a market capitalization of \$114.60 billion.

SEBI:



It refers to Securities and Exchange Board of India. SEBI is responsible for regulating Securities market in India. It was founded in 1988 as a non-statutory body for regulating securities market. Statutory Powers was given to SEBI on 30 January 1992 through Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Act, 1992.

Markets regulator SEBI has signed a bilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kazakhstan-based Astana Financial Services Authority (AFSA) for mutual co-operation and technical assistance. The MoU was signed by SEBI Chairman Ajay Tyagi and the acting chief executive officer (CEO) of AFSA Mukhtar Bubeyev.

The objective of the MoU is to strengthen cross border co-operation in area of securities regulation. This would facilitate mutual assistance, contribute towards efficient performance of the supervisory

functions, and enable effective enforcement of laws and regulations governing the securities markets.

Art and Culture

Mandu:



It is a small city in the state of Madhya Pradesh in India, now best known for a fort built by Baaz Bahadur in memory of his queen Rani Roopmati. Between 1401 and 1561 it was the capital of a Muslim state in the north of India. Mandu is a world-famous picturesque tourist destination located in Dhar district of the Madhya Pradesh.

Mandu Festival: This festival is the first edition that is being celebrated in Mandu, Madhya Pradesh. It is a five day festival that will be celebrated till January 1 2020. The festival includes cultural, spiritual and adventure events. The fort city is celebrating the idea of 'Khojne mein kho jao'. The festival offers an eclectic mix of performing arts, art installations, workshops, nature trails, walks, architecture, food and music and much more. The aim for celebrating this festival is to promote its global tourism destination and its bid to become a world heritage site in UNESCO.

Losar Festival:



Losar is a festival in Tibetan Buddhism. It Marks the start of spring and the first day of the lunar calendar. Losar is a popular festival of Arunachal Pradesh. It is celebrated by the people of Monpa Tribe who are said to be inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh since 500 BC. It is observed by Tibetans, Bhutanese, Tibetan Buddhists and certain ethnic groups in Pakistan, Nepal and

India. It is celebrated on the 1st Day of Eleventh Month of Tibetan Calendar correlating to a date in the Gregorian calendar. The celebrations continue for 3 to 9 days. It is also observed in all the Himalayan states of the country in different times. To mark the beginning of New Year, prayer flags are hoisted at important religious places. The celebration includes making symbolic meals and offerings to God and Goddess. Houses are decorated with good luck signs for prosperous New Year and bounty of crops. Losar is also one of the major attractions for tourists in winter season, as the festival coupled with several ritual performances and traditional events.

The new Union territory of India, Ladakh, is celebrating Losar Festival to mark the Ladakhi New Year. Ladakh Buddhist Association in collaboration with the Union Territory Administration is organizing a

grand celebration today at Chokanga Vihara in Leh. This festival is celebrated in various parts of Ladakh region.

National Tribal Dance Festival:

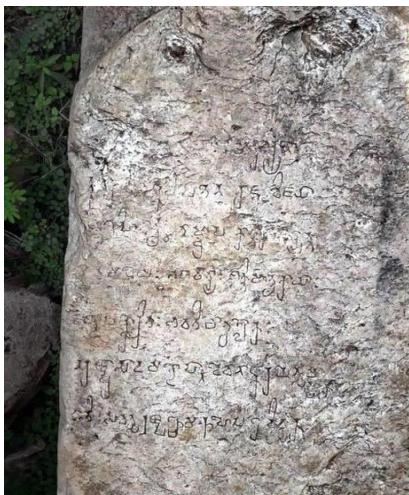


It is an annual festival celebrated by aborigines and tribal of India. The festival celebrates the dances of Adivasi and tribal people in India as well as their indigenous tribal dance culture. It is held during the month of December. It is organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India in collaboration with IGRMS, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Raipur: It is the capital city of Chattisgarh. The first edition of National tribal Dance festival has been organized in Raipur. The inaugural function presided over by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. More than 1300 participants from 25 states & UTs of the country and six countries are participating in this three-day dance fest. These folk dance teams will present their respective folk art cultures. 43 styles of four different dance forms will be presented by 29 tribal groups. The artists from 6 countries including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Maldives, Thailand and Uganda will also perform at the event.

Andhra Pradesh: Andhra Pradesh is a state bordering India's southeastern coast. It is the 4th largest State of India. Its capital city is Amravati. It is well known for its rich natural resources, temples and rivers. The state of Andhra also shares a part of the coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal. Telegu is the official language of Andra Pradesh.

ASI:



It refers to the Archeological Survey of India. Archeological Survey of India's Epigraphy Branch in the Chebrolu village located in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh has recently discovered Sanskrit inscriptions which is believed that is it one of the oldest inscriptions of south India. This discovery predates the evolution of the language by almost 200 years. The inscriptions were spotted by local villagers when they were restoring and repairing local Bheemeshwara temple. As per ASI the recently discovered earliest epigraph is the evidence of the Saptamatrika cult.

Saptramatikas are 7 female deities worshipped in Hinduism.

The inscription is in Sanskrit and in Brahmi characters issued by Satavahana dynasty king Vijaya in 207 A.D. The newly discovered inscriptions records the construction of a Prasada

(temple), a mandapa and consecration of images by a person named Kartika on the southern side of the temple of Goddess Saptamatrika at Tambrape. Tambrape is the ancient name of Chebrolou. An inscription in Prakrit language and of Brahmi characters belonging to the 1st century AD was also discovered in this region.

Places in News

Sikkim:



It is a state in northeastern India. It borders Tibet in the north and northeast, Bhutan in the east, Nepal in the west, and West Bengal in the south. Sikkim is also located close to India's Siliguri Corridor near Bangladesh. Sikkim is the least populous and second smallest among the Indian states. India's highest mountain, 8,586m Kangchenjunga lies in this state. Sikkim is also home to glaciers, alpine meadows and thousands of

varieties of wildflowers. Sikkim was the first fully organic state of the country where all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

SIFFCO: It refers to Sikkim Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Organics. Chief Minister of Sikkim Prem Singh Tamang laid down the foundation stone of two Integrated Processing Units of Sikkim Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Organics Ltd.(SIFFCO) in Rangpoc East Sikkim. Sikkim IFFCO is a joint venture between the world's largest fertilizer Cooperative, IFFCO and Government of Sikkim. SIFFCO aims to market and produce the organic produce of the country with its main focus on Sikkim and other north-eastern states of India. It will mainly operate in commercial crops that are ginger, turmeric, large cardamom and buckwheat.

Hyderabad:



It is the capital of southern India's Telangana state. It is a major center for the technology industry. Its historic sites include Golconda Fort, a former diamond-trading center that was once the Qutb Shahi dynastic capital and the Charminar which is a 16th-century mosque whose 4 arches support towering minarets.

IRCS: It refers to the Indian Red Cross Society. It is a voluntary humanitarian organization to protect human life and health based in India. It is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and so shares the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It was founded in 1920 by Claude Hill, headquartered in New Delhi.

Mobile app: President Ram Nath Kovind launched a mobile app of the Indian Red Cross Society, Telangana State Branch at Raj Bhavan, Hyderabad. Telangana Centre for Good Governance developed this app which is accessible in all languages. The developers informed that the access to blood bank and Red Cross membership will become easy with the launching of the mobile app.

Andhra Pradesh:



Andhra Pradesh is a state bordering India's southeastern coast. Major cultural landmarks include Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, an ornate hilltop shrine to Hindu's Vishnu, in the southern part of the state. It is the seventh-largest state in India. The chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh is YS Jaganmohan Reddy and the Governor is Biswa Bhusan Harichanda.

Netanna Nestham: It is a welfare scheme for weavers. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh launched Nethanna Nestham' scheme at Dharmavaram in Anantapur district. The YSR Netanna Nestham scheme provides an annual incentive of Rs 24,000 for handloom weavers. The aim of the scheme is to help the weavers who have been facing financial crisis and heavy debts.

Tamil Nadu:



Tamil Nadu is the tenth largest state in India. The bordering states are Kerala to the west, Karnataka to the north west and Andhra Pradesh to the north. To the east is the Bay of Bengal and the state encircles the union territory of Puducherry. It was formed on 1 November 1956. Its capital is Chennai. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is Edappadi K. Palaniswami

Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund: The First tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed under Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF) between the department of Fisheries Government of India, NABARD and the Government of Tamil Nadu. The agreement was signed for the implementation FIDF.

FIDF: It refers to Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund. It was formed in 2018 to boost fish production to achieve the target of producing 15 million tonnes of fish production by 2020 and 20 million tonnes by 2022-23 from current production of 11.4 million tonnes. The FIDF will provide finance to the eligible entities, cooperatives, entrepreneurs and individuals for development of identified fisheries infrastructure. The projects are to be implemented in the southern coasts of Tamil Nadu.

NLEs: It refers to Nodal Loaning entities. The NLEs for the fund are the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and all scheduled banks. The Fund provides concessional finance under the FIDF to take up investment activities of fisheries development.

NCDC: It is an abbreviation of National Cooperative Development Corporation. It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1963 as a statutory Corporation under Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare. It has many regional centers to provide financial assistance to Cooperatives or Societies or Federations.

NABARD: It is the acronym for India's apex development bank, which is the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. It was set up in 1982 after the recommendation of the Committee to Review Arrangements of Institutional Credit for Agriculture and Rural Development (CRAFICARD)

With headquarters in Mumbai, NABARD has branches across India. It was formed by a special parliamentary act. The main objective of the organization was the advancement of rural India by enhancing the flow of credit for the upliftment of agriculture as well as the rural non-agricultural sector.

Jammu & Kashmir:



It is a union territory of India (until October 31, 2019, a state). It is the northern-most state of India and shares its borders with Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, and the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan.

Chillai Kalan: The traditional 40-day period of harshest winter in Kashmir known as 'Chillai-Kalan' began on 21 December 2019. It begins with Winter Solstice, It is a period when the chances of snowfall are maximum and most frequent. The weather remains cold during this period as the day temperature also dips drastically, freezing most of the water bodies including the famous Dal Lake. Chillai-Kalan is followed by Chillai-Khurd and Chillai-Bachha. A 20-day long Chillai-Khurd (small cold) starts from January 31 to February 19 and a 10-day long Chillai-Bachha (baby cold) occurs between 20th February and 2nd of March.

Jharkhand:



It is a state in eastern India, created on 15 November 2000. Previously, it was the southern half of Bihar. The state shares its border with the states of Bihar to the north, Uttar Pradesh to the northwest, Chhattisgarh to the west, Odisha to the south and West Bengal to the east. It is also known as the bush land or the land of forests of India. Its capital and sub-capital is Ranch and Dumka respectively. The state is known for its waterfalls, hills and

holy places like the Baidyanath Dham, Parasnath and Rajrappa.

Jharkhand Election 2019: The elections took place in five phases between November 30 and December 20. The JMM-Congress-RJD alliance staged massive victory with 47 seats in the 81-member Jharkhand assembly on December 23, 2019. JMM's Hemant Soren is likely to be the next Chief Minister of Jharkhand.

Persons in News

Harsh Vardhan Shringla:



He is an Indian diplomat and the current Indian Ambassador to the United States. He previously served as the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh and Ambassador to Thailand.

He has been chosen as the next Foreign Secretary. He will take charge after Vijay Keshav Gokhale's two-year term ends next month. The appointment has been cleared by the Appointments

Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to the order by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Monisha Ghosh:



She is an Indian-American who has been appointed as the first woman Chief Technology Officer at the US government's powerful Federal Communications Commission (FCC). She will advise Indian-American Chairman of the FCC Ajit Pai and the agency on technology and engineering issues. She will also work closely with the Office of Engineering and Technology. Dr Ghosh will take charge on January 13. She replaces Dr Eric Burger.

FCC: It refers to Federal Communications Commission. It was established on 19 June 1934 by Franklin D. Roosevelt. It's headquartered in Washington, USA. It is an independent agency of the United States government created by statute to regulate interstate communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable.

R. Nagaswamy:



He is renowned Indian historian, archaeologist and epigraphist. He served as the founder-director of Tamilnadu Archaeology Department. In 2018 he was awarded India's third highest civilian award Padma Bhushan.

He was honored at the Silver Jubilee International Conference of Art held in Dhaka by Bangladesh Culture Minister K.M. Khalid. He was honored for the contribution of Nagaswamy to art, archaeology, history, and culture. The Silver Jubilee volume of the Journal of Bengal Art was dedicated to him. The art carries articles by international scholars.

Sangita Reddy: She is the Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group. She has been appointed as the President of FICCI for 2019-20. She succeeds Sandip Somany, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, HSIL.

Uday Shanker: He is the President of The Walt Disney Company APAC & Chairman of Star & Disney India. He has been elevated as Senior Vice President of FICCI.

Sanjiv Mehta: He is the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL). He was appointed as the Vice President of FICCI.

FICCI: It is the abbreviation for Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry. It was established in 1927. It's headquarters in in New Delhi.

Major Anup Mishra:



He is Major from the Indian Army. He has developed a bulletproof jacket named 'Sarvatra,' which can stop bullets being shot by a sniper rifle. The jacket developed at the College of Military Engineering, Pune. He decided to develop a bulletproof jacket the day he was hit by a stray bullet on his coat during an operation when he was

deployment in Jammu and Kashmir. With this technology, India has becomes the only third country in the world to have capacity to build this kind of bullet-proof jacket. Currently he is posted as the instructor at College of Military engineering, Pune, Maharashtra.

Major Anoop Mishra was honored with the prestigious Army Design Bureau (ADB) Excellence Award for developing bulletproof jacket 'Sarvatra' by the 27th Chief of Indian Army General Bipin Rawat.

ADB: It refers to the Army Design Bureau. The ADB was set up to work together with industry and academia and develop indigenous solutions for the Indian Army.

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