WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- Art and Culture
- Defence
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- Sports News

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Raja Prabha: Raja Parba, the famous festival of Odisha, has started being celebrated in Odisha on June 14, 2021. It is a 3-day festival that celebrates womanhood.

About Raja Parba:
- Raja Parba is also known as Mithuna Sankranti.
- This festival falls in mid-June.
- It is a three-day-long festival of celebrating womanhood in Odisha.
- First day is called Pahili Raja; second day is Mithuna Sankranti while the third day is Bhudaaha or Basi Raja.
- Day before first day is called Sajabaja, during which house, kitchen including grinding stones are cleaned and spices are ground for three days. Women and girls take rest from work.
- The very first day of this long festival is considered to be the last day of the month Jestha (summers).
- Second day of the festival marks the beginning of solar month of Mithuna, on which season of rains starts.
- Fourth day is called Vasumati Snana or ceremonial bath of Bhudevi.
- This festival became more popular in medieval time as an agricultural holiday marking worship of Bhudevi.
- During 3 days, women don’t work.

Mythology:
- It is believed that the mother Goddess Earth or the divine wife of Lord Vishnu undergoes menstruation during the first three days.
- Mother Earth menstruates and prepares herself for future agricultural activities as the monsoon arrives.

Meaning:
- Name Raja came from Sanskrit word ‘Rajas’ which means menstruation.
- When a woman menstruates, she is called ‘Rajaswala’ or a menstruating woman.

Note: This festival is synonymous with varieties of cakes (pithas). Thus, Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) has also launched a special programme named ‘Pitha on Wheels’.

Odisha:
- Odisha also formerly Orissa, is an Indian state located on the eastern coast of India.
- It neighbors the states of West Bengal and Jharkhand to the north, Chhattisgarh to the west and Andhra Pradesh to the south.
- It is an eastern Indian state on the Bay of Bengal.
- It is known for its tribal cultures and its many ancient Hindu temples. The Jagannath Temple in Puri is a very sacred and religious temple of Hindus.
- The capital of Odisha is Bhubaneswar.
- The Governor and the Chief Minister of Odisha are Ganeshi Lal and Naveen Patnaik respectively.

**Pulitzer Prizes 2021:** The 105th class of Pulitzer Prize 2021 winners in Journalism, Books, Drama and Music were announced recently recognizing the best work in a year in which people isolated themselves because of a deadly pandemic and took to the streets over racial injustice.

**Highlights:**
- The Pulitzer Prizes in journalism were first awarded in 1917 and are considered the field’s most prestigious honour in the United States.
- Pulitzer Prizes awarded special citation to Darnella Frazier, the teenager who recorded the killing of George Floyd.
- The Star Tribune, of Minneapolis, won a Pulitzer Prize for breaking news for its coverage of the May 25, 2020, killing of Floyd and the resulting civil unrest that tore through the city.

**Complete List of Winners:**

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<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Winner</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The New York Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Wesley Morris of The New York Times</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Robert Greene of the Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Editorial writing</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Megha Rajagopalan, Alison Kille, and Christo Buschek of BuzzFeed News</td>
<td>International Reporting</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Staff of the Star Tribune, Minneapolis, Minn.</td>
<td>Breaking News Reporting</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Matt Rocheleau, Vernal Coleman, Laura Crimaldi, Evan Allen and Brendan McCarthy of The Boston Globe</td>
<td>Investigative Reporting</td>
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<td>Author(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Andrew Chung, Lawrence Hurley, Andrea Januta, Jaimi Dowdell and Jackie Botts of Reuters</td>
<td>Explanatory Reporting</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Kathleen McGrory and Neil Bedi of the Tampa Bay Times</td>
<td>Local Reporting</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Staffs of The Marshall Project; A L.com, Birmingham; IndyStar, Indianapolis; and the Invisible Institute, Chicago</td>
<td>National Reporting</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mitchell S. Jackson, freelance contributor, Runner’s World</td>
<td>Feature Writing</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Michael Paul Williams of the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Photography Staff of Associated Press</td>
<td>Breaking News Photography</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Emilio Morenatti of Associated Press</td>
<td>Feature Photography</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Lisa Hagen, Chris Haxel, Graham Smith and Robert Little of National Public Radio</td>
<td>Audio Reporting</td>
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### BOOKS, DRAMA, AND MUSIC

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<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Night Watchman by Louise Erdrich</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>The Hot Wing King, by Katori Hall</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America, by Marcia Chatelain (Liveright/Norton)</td>
<td>History</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X by Les Payne and Tamara Payne</td>
<td>Biography or autobiography</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Postcolonial Love Poem by Natalie Diaz</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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### About Pulitzer Prize:

- The Pulitzer Prize is an award for achievements in newspaper, magazine and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States.
- It was established in 1917 by provisions in the will of American (Hungarian-born) Joseph Pulitzer who had made his fortune as a newspaper publisher and is administered by Columbia University in New York City.
- In twenty-two of the categories, each winner receives a certificate and a US $15,000 cash award (raised from $10,000 in 2017).
- The winner in the public service category is awarded a gold medal.
Declassification of War Histories: The Minister of Defence Shri Rajnath Singh has recently approved a policy on declassification of War histories by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Key Features of the Policy:

- The policy requires MoD organizations, such as the army, navy, air force, coast guard, Integrated Defence Staff and Assam Rifles, to transfer their records -- including war diaries, letters of proceedings and operational record books -- to the ministry’s History Division for proper upkeep, archival and recording of history.
- The responsibility for declassification of records rests with the respective organisations as specified in the Public Record Act 1993 and Public Record Rules 1997, as amended from time to time.
- Under this policy, Ministry of Defence (MoD) will archive, declassify, compile and publish war and operations histories.
- However, declassification of older wars like of 1962 war is not automatic.
- Declassification will be taken up on case-by-case basis by a committee which will be constituted under the new policy.
- As per policy, records should ordinarily be declassified in 25 years.
- Records which are older than 25 years should be appraised by archival experts and transferred to National Archives of India after histories of war or operations have been compiled.

Constitution of a Committee:

- The policy mandates constitution of a committee.
- As per policy, a committee will be constituted which will be headed by Joint Secretary of MoD.
- It will comprise of representatives of Services, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and prominent military historians for compilation of war & operations histories.
- The History Division of the committee will be responsible to coordinate with various departments while compiling, for approval & publishing of war and operations histories.
- War/operations histories are to be compiled within 5 years.
- The above-mentioned Committee should be formed within two years of completion of war/operations.
- Thereafter, collection of records and compilation should be completed in three years and disseminated to all concerned.

Will all reports on wars be public?

- Committee will take a view on earlier wars and operations.
- Compiled history on wars and operations will be consumed internally first, within five years.
- After that, the committee may decide to publicly release whole or parts of it based on the sensitivity of subject.

Background:

- The Proposal of having war histories written with clear cut
The policy on declassification was recommended by Kargil Review Committee headed by K Subrahmanyan and N.N. Vohra Committee with a purpose to analyse lessons learnt and prevent future mistakes.

**Fakir Mohan Senapati:** He was an Indian writer, poet, philosopher and social reformer. June 14, 2021 was his 103rd death anniversary.

He passed away on June 14, 1918.

**About Fakir Mohan Senapati:**

- Fakir Mohan Senapati (13 January 1843 – 14 June 1918) often referred to as Utkala Byasa Kabi (Odisha’s Vyasa).
- He is regarded as the father of Odia nationalism and modern Odia literature.
- He played a leading role in establishing the distinct identity of Odia language.
- He is known to have introduced novel writing, short story, and autobiography genres in Odia literature.

**Key works by him:**

- Chha Maana Atha Guntha is the first Indian novel to deal with the exploitations of landless peasants by the feudal Lord.
- It was written much before the October revolution of Russia or much before the emerging of Marxist ideas in India.
- His “Rebati” (1898) is widely recognized as the first Odia short story.
- He wrote a long poem, Utkala Bhramanam, that first appeared in 1892.

**Ordnance Factory Board (OFB):** The Union Cabinet has approved the corporatization of the British-era Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) located in Kolkata which has 41 factories.

**Key Points:**

- The 246-year old OFB will be dissolved, and replaced seven new fully government-owned corporate entities on the lines of Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU).
The corporatization process by the cabinet would be supervised by the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGM) chaired by Rajnath Singh and this EGM would address any issue that may arise during the course of the implementation.

The creation of the entities will be 100 percent owned by the government.

There would be no change in the service conditions of the OFB employees.

All IFB employees (Group A, B, and C) from different production units will be transferred to the corporate entities on deemed deputation for an initial period of 2 years.

The transformation is likely to take place by the end of the year.

Purpose of Restructuring OFB:

- This decision was taken from the perspective of becoming Atmanirbhar in terms of national security.
- The move to replace the OFB with the seven corporate entities will allow these companies autonomy as well as help improve accountability and efficiency.
- The restructuring is aimed at the following:
  1. Transforming the ordnance factories into productive and profitable assets
  2. Deepening their specialization in product range
  3. Enhancing competitiveness
  4. Improving quality
  5. Cost-efficiency

Seven entities will be responsible for different verticals of products that are being produced by 41 ordnance factories.

Ammunition and Explosives group will be engaged in production of ammunition.

Vehicles group will engage in production of defence mobility and combat vehicles.

About Ordnance Factory Board (OFB):

- Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) consisting of the Indian Ordnance Factories is a Government agency under the control of department of defence production (DDP) Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India (GoI).
- OFB is a conglomerate of 41 Factories, 9 Training Institutes, 3 Regional Marketing Centres and 4 Regional Controller of Safety.
- It is headquartered at Kolkata.
- It is the world's largest government-operated production organisation and the oldest organization in India.
- It is often called the "Fourth Arm of Defence" and the "Force Behind the Armed Forces" of India.
- It is the 35th largest defence equipment manufacturer in the world, 2nd largest in Asia, and the largest in India.
- It is engaged in research, development, testing, production, marketing and logistics of the product range across air, land and sea systems.
- Under the 'Make-In-India' initiative, Ordnance Factories have made considerable progress with
the development of the 155 mm 45 calibre ‘Dhanush’ and the upgrading of existing 130 mm M-46 artillery guns to 155 mm 45 calibre ‘Sharang’ gun systems.

Origin:

- The first Indian ordnance factory can trace its origins back to the year 1712 when the Dutch Ostend Company established a Gun Powder Factory in Ichhapur.
- In 1787, another gunpowder factory was established at Ichapore; it began production in 1791, and the site was later used as a rifle factory, beginning in 1904.
- On 18th March 1801, the first Ordnance Factory, now known as the ‘Gun and Shell Factory’ at Cossipore was established under the aegis of its corporate headquarters Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in Kolkata and production began on 18 March 1802.
- This is the oldest ordnance factory in India still in existence.

Now, OFB will be replaced by 7 new Defence PSU.

Note: Every year, 18 March is celebrated as the Ordnance Factory Day in India.

ADMM-Plus: The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently addressed the ADMM-Plus through video conferencing; says terrorism & radicalization gravest threats to peace and security in world.

Note: ADMM-Plus refers to The ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus.

Highlights:

- Addressing the ADMM-Plus, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hailed the Indian values of ‘Vasudhaive Kutumbakam’ and ‘Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah’ and urged every country to develop an outlook envisaging world as one family to encourage shared approach.
- He highlighted India’s views on dealing with major security challenges in the region. He said, terrorism and radicalization are the gravest threats to peace and security in the world.
- He underlined the importance of need based respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolutions of disputes through dialogue and adherence to International rules and laws.
- He also reiterated India’s support to freedom of navigation and over-flight for all in International waters in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- He called for a multi-stakeholder approach, guided by democratic values for safe digital connectivity with due respect to sovereignty of countries.
He said that as a founding member of the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting, India seeks to enhance capacity building through collaboration in the areas of Maritime Search and Rescue.

About ADMM-Plus:

- The ADMM-Plus is a forum comprising 10 ASEAN member countries and 8 dialogue partner nations including India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States.
- The 15th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting is being hosted by Brunei as it is the chair of the ASEAN grouping this year.
- The ADMM-Plus forum aims to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability and development in the region.
- The inaugural ADMM-Plus was convened in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.

The SIPRI Yearbook 2021 assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

The 51st edition of the Yearbook reveals an unbroken deterioration within the conditions for international stability.

Findings:

- In accordance with the “SIPRI Yearbook 2020-Armaments, Disarmament and International Security” from 2019 there’s a rise within the nuclear weapons stockpile of India and China.
- However India’s overall possession of nuclear weapons is a smaller amount than half Beijing’s and also slightly less than what Pakistan possesses.
- The nine nuclear armed states — the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea — together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.
- Russia and the U.S. together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons.
- India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads at the start of 2021, compared with 150 at the start of last year, while Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160 in 2020.
- China’s nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads, up from 320 at the start of 2020.

About the decrease in nuclear arsenals:

- The nine nuclear-armed states together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.
This marked a decrease from the 13,400 possessed at the beginning of 2020.

Despite this overall decrease, the estimated number of nuclear weapons currently deployed with operational forces increased to 3825, from 3720 last year.

Around 2000 of these—nearly all of which belonged to Russia or the USA—were kept in a state of high operational alert.

What is SIPRI?

- The full form of SIPRI is Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.
- SIPRI was established in 1966.
- It is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

Indian Navy & EUNAVFOR Joint Exercise: The Indian Navy and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) recently conducted their first ever exercise in Gulf of Aden.

Key Points:

- Indian Naval Ship Trikand participated in the exercise, which is currently deployed for anti-piracy operations.
- Total of five warships from four navies participated in the exercise held on 18th & 19th.
- Other warships that participated in exercise include Italian Navy Ship ITS Carabinere, two French Navy Ship FS Tonnerre & FS Surcouf and Spanish Navy Ship ESPS Navarra.
- A virtual “Information Sharing Exercise” is also being conducted between Indian Navy Information Fusion Centre in Indian Ocean Region and Maritime Security Centre in Horn of Africa.

About the exercise:

- The two-day exercise witnessed high tempo-naval operations at sea such as advanced air defence & anti-submarine exercises, cross deck helicopter operations, boarding operations, tactical manoeuvres, underway replenishment, search & rescue etc.
- Ships of four navies endeavour to enhance their war-fighting skills and their ability to promote peace, security and stability in maritime domain.

- EUNAVFOR and Indian Navy also saw eye-to-eye on multiple issues such as counter piracy operations and protection of vessels which
were deployed under charter of World Food Programme (UN WFP).

**Indian Navy and EUNAVFOR:**

- Both the navies conduct regular interaction through SHADE (Shared Awareness and Deconfliction) meetings which is held annually at Bahrain.
- It highlights their shared values of ensuring freedom of seas.

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**Economics**

![GST Council Meeting](image)

**44th meeting of GST Council:** On June 12, 2021, the 44th meeting of Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council was chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman where several changes in GST rate have been made which would be applicable till September 30, 2021.

**Key Highlights:**

- The following decisions were taken at the meeting:
- GST Council has accepted recommendations of Group of Ministers (GoM) which was set up to look on tax relief on Covid-19 medical supplies.
- It decided to waive the tax levied on two critical drugs against COVID-19 and mucormycosis — tocilizumab and amphotericin B — and reset the tax rate to 5% for 14 major pandemic relief items, till September 30.
- The 5% GST levied on vaccines was left unchanged.
- GST rates on anticoagulants such as Heparin and Remdesivir have been cut from 12% to 5%.
- Ambulances, which are currently taxed at 28%, will attract a GST levy of 12%.
- GST rates on gas or electric or other furnaces used in crematorium including the installation charges have been reduced to 5% from 18%.
- For oxygen concentrators, medical grade oxygen and related devices such as ventilators, BiPAP machines, the GST rate has also been brought down to 5% from 12%.
- The same reduction has been approved in the levies on COVID-testing kits and pulse oximeters.
- The 5% rate will apply to personal imports of oxygen concentrators as well as pulse oximeters.
- The 18% GST payable on hand sanitizers has been reduced to 5%.
- 5% tax would be applied on ventilator masks or cannula or helmets.

**Background:**

- Last meeting of GST Council was held on May 28, 2021 which had recommended full exemption from IGST on several specified COVID-19
related goods like medical oxygen, oxygen concentrators etc.

- Following the meeting, Council decided to constitute a Group of Ministers (GoM) to recommend on rates for individual items.

**Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS):** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently announced that the scope of Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) will be expanded by August 31 2021.

**Highlights:**

Scope of BBPS has been expanded by adding ‘mobile prepaid recharges’ as a biller category.

This move aims to help millions of prepaid phone subscribers across India.

**Background:**

- The scope and coverage of BBPS were expanded in September 2019.
- It then included all categories of billers raising recurring bills as eligible participants voluntarily.
- It did not included billers of mobile prepaid recharges.
- Before 2019, facility of payment of recurring bills through BBPS was available only to five sectors viz, direct to home (DTH), gas, electricity, water and telecom.

**About BBPS:**

- BBPS refers to Bharat Bill Payment System.
- BBPS functions under the aegis of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- It is an integrated bill payment system offering interoperable bill payment service to customers online and through a network of agents on ground.
- It provides for multiple payment modes and instant confirmation of payment.

**About NPCI:**

- NPCI refers to the National Payment Corporation of India.
- NPCI is an umbrella organization for all retail payments in India.
- It was founded in 2008.
- It has been incorporated as a Not for Profit Company under the provisions of Section 25 of Companies Act 1956 (now Section 8 of Companies Act 2013).
- It is an initiative of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks Association (IBA) under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 for creating a robust Payment & Settlement Infrastructure in India.
- It is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- The current MD & CEO is Dilip Asbe.
Inland Vessel Bill 2021: The Union Cabinet on recently gave the nod to the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021, which will replace the Inland Vessels Act, 1917.

- The Bill will regulate safety, security and registration of inland vessels.

Key Features of the Bill:

- A key feature of the Bill is a unified law for the entire country, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
- The certificate of registration granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States.
- The Bill provides for a central database for recording the details of vessel, vessel registration, crew on an electronic portal.
- Non-mechanically propelled vessels will also require to be enrolled at district, taluk or panchayat or village level.
- It enlarges the definition of ‘inland waters’, by including tidal water limit and national waterways declared by the Central Government.
- It also deals with pollution control measures of Inland Vessels.
- This Bill directs the Central Government to designate a list of chemicals, substances, etc. as pollutants.
- As of now, total 4,000 km inland waterways have been operationalized.

Inland Water Transport (IWT) in India:

- India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
- It is a fuel-efficient and environment-friendly mode of transportation.
- Under National Waterways Act 2016, 111 waterways have been declared as National Waterways.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is implementing the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) at an estimated cost of ₹5369.18 crores for capacity augmentation of navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of Ganga (part of NW-1) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank.

About Inland Waterways Authority (IWT) of India:

- It came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- It primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT (Inland Water Transport) infrastructure on national waterways through grants received from the Ministry of Shipping.
It is headquartered at Noida (Uttar Pradesh).

FAME II Incentives for India

FAME II Amendment: Ministry of Heavy Industry recently announced major amendments in ongoing FAME-II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India) scheme.

The Ministry has fixed incentives for India-made electric two-wheelers.

Highlights:

- With the recent amendments on price side and subsidies government aims to promote electric two-wheeler usage across India.
- The second phase of FAME India Scheme focuses on supporting electrification of public and shared transportation and aims to support electrification through subsidies for electric vehicles, including buses, passenger cars and two-wheelers.
- Out of total budgetary support, about 86 percent of fund has been allocated for Demand Incentive so as to create demand for xEVs in the country.
- Reduction in price will help in EV adoption and strengthen government’s plans of making India an electric vehicle nation by 2030.

What are the recent amendments?

- The subsidy rate for electric two-wheelers has been increased to Rs 15,000/kWh, which is nearly 40 percent of vehicle cost.
- Earlier, subsidy rate for electric two-wheelers was Rs 10,000/kWh

Procurement of EVs:

- Central government will procure electric buses and three-wheelers on large scale.
- EESL will be directed to procure three lakh electric rickshaws and has been told to aggregate demand for electric buses across nine major cities namely, Surat, Pune, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Delhi and Bengaluru.

FAME India Scheme:

- This scheme was launched in 2015 with the aim of incentivising vehicle segments including 2-Wheeler, Passenger 4-Wheeler Vehicle, 3-Wheeler Auto, Light Commercial Vehicles and Buses.
- It also covers Hybrid & Electric technologies such as Mild Hybrid, plug in Hybrid, Strong Hybrid and Battery Electric Vehicles.
- This scheme is monitored by Department of Heavy Industries.
- It has four focus areas viz., Technology development, Demand Creation, Charging Infrastructure and Pilot Projects.
Simplified Registration Process for MSMEs: The Government of India (GoI) has simplified the process of registration for the Micro, Medium and Small Enterprises, MSMEs.

Key Points:
- MSMEs will only require PAN and Aadhaar for registration.
- Once the MSMEs are registered, they will be getting priority and finance.
- No new training will be required to small units in fields of entrepreneurship and other related aspects.
- In order to boost the economic activities of MSMEs, the Government had announced a special incentive package of 20 lakh crore rupees under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

About MSME:
- MSMEs are considered as engine of economic growth which are involved in promoting equitable development.
- They comprise of 90% of total enterprises and generate highest rates of employment growth.
- They require low investment and have operational flexibility & capacity to develop appropriate indigenous technology.
- MSME is second largest employment generating sector after agriculture, providing employment to 120 million persons in country.
- It contributes about 6.11% of manufacturing GDP and 24.63% of GDP from service activities.
- It also contributes 45% of overall exports from India.
- Inclusive growth is promoted by MSMEs as it provides employment opportunities in rural areas.

Growth of MSMEs in India:
- Campaigns such as Start-up India, Skill India, Digital India and Make in India were launched with the aim of providing MSME players a level playing field in a bid to enhance productivity.
- Increasing internet penetration and tie-ups with non-banking finance companies are also facilitating growth in MSME sector.

Environment

Operation Olivia: The Indian Coast Guards have recently enforced laws and started operation Olivia to protect Olive Ridley turtles in Odisha.
About Operation Olivia:

- Operation Olivia was started by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), first in early 1980s.
- This operation helps protect Olive Ridley turtles as they congregate along the Odisha coast for breeding and nesting.
- There are three beaches along the Odisha coast including Gahirmatha, the mouth of the Devi River, and Rushikulya.
- The Coast Guard carries out round-the-clock surveillance from November till May utilizing Coast Guard assets like Fast patrol vessels, Interceptor craft, Air cushion vessels and Dornier aircraft to enforce laws near the rookeries.
- The Orissa Marine Fisheries Act empowers the Coast Guard as one of its enforcement agencies.

Measures taken:

- The compulsory use of turtle excluder devices (TED) by trawlers in the waters adjoining nesting areas.
- Prohibiting the use of gill nets on turtle approaches to the shore.
- Curtailing turtle poaching.

Conservation status:

- Olive Ridley turtles are listed as vulnerable under International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
- All five species of sea turtles found in India are included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and in the Appendix I of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora which prohibits trade in turtle products by signatory countries.

Olive Ridley turtle:

- The Olive Ridley sea turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea), also known commonly as the Pacific Ridley sea turtle, is a species of turtle in the family Cheloniidae.
- The species is one of the most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- It is primarily found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, but also in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Nestling Habits:

- This turtle and the related Kemp’s ridley turtle are best known for their unique mass nesting sites called arribadas, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Breeding and nesting of the Olive Ridley Turtles is observed from November to December.

Threat:

- Dense fishing activity along the coasts of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Bengal, especially ocean-going trawlers, mechanized fishing boats and gill-netters pose a severe threat to turtles.
- Heavy predation of Olive Ridley turtle eggs by dogs and wild animals.
- Beach soil erosion.
About Indian Coast Guard:
- It is an Armed Force, Search and Rescue and Maritime Law Enforcement agency under the Ministry of Defence.
- It was established in 1978.
- It has a wide range of task capabilities for both surface and air operations.
- It is one of the largest coast guards in the world.

- Its purpose is to raise awareness of the presence of desertification and drought, highlighting methods of preventing desertification and recovering from drought.

Theme of 2021:
The theme for 2021 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is “Restoration. Land. Recovery. We build back better with healthy land”.

History:
- In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared June 17 the “World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought” to market public awareness of the difficulty.
- The United Nations, NGOs and countries organize events to spread awareness about the cooperation required to combat desertification and drought.

Significance:
- Restoring degraded land brings economic resilience, creates jobs, raises incomes and increases food security.

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2021: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed on June 17 every year.

Highlights:
- This year, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) celebrates the 25 years of progress made by countries on sustainable land management.
- The UN-designated day is all about a green planet, sustainable development, and health and welfare of people.

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• It also helps biodiversity to recover.
• Besides, it locks away the atmospheric carbon warming the Earth, slowing climate change.
• A green planet can also lessen the impacts of climate change and underpin a green recovery from the pandemic.

Desertification and the Sustainable Development Goals:

• The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development declares that "we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations".
• Specifically, SDG Goal 15: Life on Land states the resolve of the United Nations and the SDG signatory nations to halt and reverse land degradation.

India’s Efforts to Combat Desertification and Drought:

• India has set a target of restoring 2.6 crore hectares of degraded land by 2030.
• The South Asian giant also assists developing countries to develop land restoration strategies.

What is Desertification?

• Desertification is the degradation of land in various areas like arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid.
• It is caused primarily by human activities and then by climatic variations.
• However, desertification does not refer to an expansion of existing deserts.
• It is caused due to dryland ecosystems, deforestation, overgrazing, bad irrigation practices, etc. which affects the productivity of the land.
Bharitalasuchus Tapani: In the mid 20th century, researchers from the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, carried out extensive studies on rocks of the Yerrapalli Formation in what is now Telangana, uncovering several fossils.

**Highlights:**

- By studying a number of these specimens stored at the Institute, a world team has now thrown light on a carnivorous reptile that lived 240 million years ago.
- They named it Bharitalasuchus tapani.
- In the Telugu language, Bhari means huge, Tala means head, and Suchus is the name of the Egyptian crocodile-headed deity.
- The species is named after paleontologist Tapan Roy Chowdhury in honour of his extensive work on the Yerrapalli Formation tetrapod fauna.

**About Bharitalasuchus Tapani:**

- Studies have revealed that the reptile belonged to a family of extinct reptiles named Erythrosuchidae.
- Bharitalasuchus tapani were robust animals with big heads and large teeth, and these probably predated other smaller reptiles.
- They were approximately the size of an adult male lion and might have been the largest predators in their ecosystems.

**About Erythrosuchidae:**

- Erythrosuchidae (meaning red crocodiles) are a family of large basal archosauriform carnivores.
- They lived from the later Early Triassic to the early Middle Triassic.
- The Triassic is a geologic period and system which spans 50.6 million years from the end of the Permian Period to the beginning of the Jurassic Period. It is the first and shortest period of the Mesozoic Era.
- The first Erythrosuchidae remains were discovered in South Africa in 1905 and more were found in China and Russia.
- The South African one is about 245 million years old, while those from China and Russia are around 240 million years old.
- Therefore, the Indian one is one among the youngest fossil records of an erythrosuchidae.

**Why it was not identified earlier?**

- A precise identification had not been possible earlier because the family was not known from other examples in India.
- It was neglected because the fossil specimen was not as complete as those of other erythrosuchids from other countries.
- Also, because few paleontologists expertly within the family had not examined the fossil or administered
the detailed comparative work needed.

About Yerrapalli Formation:

- The Yerrapalli Formation is a Triassic rock formation consisting primarily of mudstones that outcrops in the Pranhita–Godavari Basin in Telangana.
- Apart from this erythrosuchid reptile, the fossil assemblage of the Yerrapalli Formation includes many other extinct creatures such as ceratodontid lungfish, rhynchosaur and allokotosaurian.

Geography:

- **Umling La Pass**: Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh recently flagged off the first ever Solo Woman Motorcycle Expedition by Ms Kanchan Ugursandi to Umling La Pass, Ladakh and back.

About Umling La Pass:

- Umling La Pass is located at an altitude of 19,300ft.
- The Pass, stretching to a distance of almost 86km, connects Chisumle and Demchok villages.
- Both these villages lie in close proximity to the Indo-China border in the eastern sector.

- It has overtaken Khardung La Pass to become the highest motorable road in the world.
- The construction of this road has been achieved by the BRO (Border Road Organization) as part of “Project Himank”

**Pyrostria Laljii**: A 15-metre-tall tree that belongs to the genus of the coffee family has recently been discovered from the Andaman Islands.

Key Points:

- The species has been named Pyrostria laljii after Lal Ji Singh, Joint Director and Head of Office, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Botanical Survey of India.
- The new species, Pyrostria laljii was first reported from the Wandoor forest in South Andaman.
- The other places in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the tree could be located are the Tirur forest near the Jarawa Reserves Forest and the Chidia Tapu (Munda Pahar) forest.
- The new species is also the first record of the genus Pyrostria in India. Plants belonging to genus Pyrostria are usually found in Madagascar.
Features:

- The tree is distinguished by a long stem with a whitish coating on the trunk and oblance-obovate leaves with a cuneate base.
- Other physical features that distinguish the tree from other species of the genus is its umbraculiform inflorescence with eight to twelve flowers.

IUCN status:

- Pyrostria laljii has been assessed as 'Critically Endangered' based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List criteria.

World Sea Turtle Day: World Sea Turtle Day is celebrated on 16 June.

Highlights:

- World Turtle Day is an annual event that has been taking place since 2000.
- It was founded by American Tortoise Rescue (ATR).
- The day is dedicated to Dr. Archie Carr, the father of sea turtle biology and the founder of the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

About American Tortoise Rescue (ATR):

- American Tortoise Rescue (ATR) was founded in 1990 by husband and wife team Susan Tellem and Marshall Thompson.
- It is a nonprofit organization that rescues and rehabilitates all species of tortoise and turtle.
- It also does a lot of work on protecting the environments in which these animals live.

Key facts about sea turtles:

- Turtles are the world's oldest reptile groups in existence, across the world found even before lizards and snakes.
- Turtles don't have teeth but have sheaths made of keratin in their upper and lower jaws.
- The first few years of their lives are referred to as lost years.
  - That's because the time between when the hatchlings emerge until they return to coastal shallow waters to forage is incredibly difficult to study.
  - The lost years they spend at sea – which can be up to 20 years – largely remain a mystery to humans.
- The sea turtle is very huge in size and can weigh about 500kgs.
- It is estimated that 1 out of 1000 sea turtle eggs survives to adulthood.
- Turtles prefer red, orange, and yellow coloured food.
- They migrate long distances and have great navigation skills to the Earth’s magnetic field.
- Six out of seven species of marine turtle are threatened with extinction because of plastic pollution.
- They have remained on earth for more than 100 million years.

**IUCN Status:**

- The International Union for the conservation of nature (IUCN) has considered it as endangered.
- The seven species of sea turtle are Loggerhead, Green, Leatherback, Hawksbill, Olive Ridley, Kemp’s Ridley, and Flatback.
- Out of these seven, two species, Hawksbill and Kemps Ridley are considered critically endangered.

**About Sea turtles of India:**

Turtles are found in India, in the coastal states of Odisha, Chennai, and Maharashtra.

The country is home to five exquisite varieties of turtles, namely:

1. Olive Ridley Turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea)
2. Leathery Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea)
3. Green Sea Turtle (Chelonia mydas)
4. Hawksbill Turtle (Eretmochelys imbricate)
5. Eastern Mud turtle (Kinosternun subrubum subrubum)

India’s famous Green Sea turtles are the largest hard-shelled sea turtles and are about 120 cms in length and 136-159 kgs in weight.

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**Deep Ocean Mission:** The Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently approved the proposal for Deep Ocean Mission for sustainable use of ocean resources and nutrient-based subsidy.

**Key Highlights:**

- The Deep Ocean Mission will prove to be a game changer in the future.
- India has seven thousand 517 km long coastline.
- The estimated cost of the Deep Ocean Mission will be over Rs 4000 crore and it will be implemented in a phase-wise manner in five years.
- For the first phase for the 3 years (2021-2024), the government would spend Rs 2,823.40 crore.
- The main objective of the Deep Ocean Mission is to support the Blue Economy Initiatives of the Government of India (GoI).
**Significance:**

- This futuristic decision will give impetus to the Blue Economy by exploring the deep ocean for resources and developing deep-sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources.
- This mission will help in the study of deep ocean biodiversity and minerals.
- Around 30 per cent of the country’s population lives in coastal areas.
- Ocean is a major economic factor supporting fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, livelihoods and blue trade.
- Oceans are also a storehouse of food, energy, minerals, and medicines.

**About Deep Ocean Mission:**

- The 'Deep Ocean Mission' will be a mission mode project to support the Blue Economy Initiatives of the government and Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will be the nodal Ministry implementing this multi-institutional ambitious mission.
- Under the Mission, a manned submersible will be developed to carry three people to a depth of six thousand metre in the ocean.
- The Deep Ocean Mission consists of the following six major components:
  1. Development of Technologies for Deep Sea Mining, and Manned Submersible
  2. Development of Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services
  3. Technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity
  4. Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration
  5. Energy and freshwater from the Ocean
  6. Advanced Marine Station for Ocean Biology.

**Projects of BRO:** On June 17, 2021, Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh dedicated 12 roads, built by Border Roads Organization (BRO) in the Northern and Eastern border areas to the nation.

**Highlight:**

- Chief Minister of Assam Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Pema Khandu, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs & Sports, Minority Affairs and AYUSH (Independent Charge) Kiren Rijiju and Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North Eastern Region & Minister of State, PMO, Dr Jitendra Singh was among the dignitaries attended the event virtually.
At an event organised in Lakhimpur district of Assam, the Raksha Mantri e-inaugurated a 20-km long double lane Kimin-Potin road, along with nine other roads in Arunachal Pradesh and one each in the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.

Raksha Mantri reiterated the resolve of the Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, for the development of North-east, describing the region as the gateway to not only the overall development of the country, but also to the nation’s relations with East Asian countries.

He also paid tribute to the soldiers who showed exemplary courage during the Galwan Valley incident last year and made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the nation.

He said that India is a peace-loving nation but its response to aggression has been resolute.

The Raksha Mantri also touched upon some of the major reforms undertaken by the Government, including appointment of Chief of Defence Staff, measures to boost self-reliance in defence manufacturing and Corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).

These reforms are proving to be a game changer in the military preparedness in the rapidly changing times, he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh underlined the constant efforts of the Government to make India self-reliant in defence manufacturing under the ‘AatmaNirbhar Bharat’ envisioned by the Prime Minister.

About:

- The roads have been constructed under ‘Arunank’, ‘Vartak’, ‘Brahmank’, ‘Udayak’, ‘Himank’ and ‘Sampark’ projects of BRO.
- The roads hold strategic and socio-economic importance as they will play an important role in strengthening national security as well as promoting development of the North-East region.
- These roads will be helpful in fulfilling the needs of our Armed Forces and transporting necessities like medicines and ration to remote areas,” he said.
- These road projects are part of the ‘Act East Policy’ of the Government wherein special emphasis is being laid on the overall development of the border areas.

About BRO:

- BRO refers to the Border Roads Organization.
- In order to ensure coordination and expeditious execution of projects, the Government of India (GoI) set up the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB) with the Prime Minister as Chairman of the Board and Defence Minister as Deputy Chairman.
- The BRO was formed on 7 May 1960 to secure India’s borders and develop infrastructure in remote areas of the north and north-east states of the country. It develops and maintains road networks in
India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.

- It is responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads along the borders with China and Pakistan. Officers from the Border Roads Engineering Service (BRES) and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the parent cadre of the Border Roads Organization.
- BRO has been entirely brought under the Ministry of Defence.
- Earlier it received funds from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- The current Director General of BRO is Lt. Gen. Rajeev Chaudhary.

TV Channel Selector Portal: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recently launched TV Channel Selector Portal.

Key Points:

- TRAI launched this portal for consumers who could not access its mobile phone app of the same name due to lack of a smartphone.
- This portal will facilitate those subscribers who do not own a mobile phone but want to use a web browser for selection of TV channels.
- It will help the subscriber to check their own subscription and view all the channels provided by the DTH and Cable operators.
- With the help of this portal subscribers can choose their channel of interest and remove the unwarranted channels.
- It also allows the subscriber to modify existing subscriptions.
- The users can also provide the feedback through the portal.

Background:

- The TV Channel Selector App for smartphone was launched on June 25, 2020 that enabled users to check their subscription, modify it, view all channels provided by their cable operators and choose channels of interest under a regulatory framework notified in December 2018.

About Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI):

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is a statutory body set up by the Government of India under section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
- TRAI was established on 20 February 1997.
- It regulates telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.

Objective:

- TRAI's mission is to create and nurture conditions for growth of
telecommunications in the country in a manner and at a pace which will enable India to play a leading role in emerging global information society.

- One of the main objectives of TRAI is to provide a fair and transparent policy environment which promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition.

Members:

- It consists of a Chairperson and not more than two full-time members and not more than two part-time members.

Amendment of TRAI Act:

- The TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance, effective from 24 January 2000, establishing a Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.
- TDSAT was set up to adjudicate any dispute between a licensor and a licensee, between two or more service providers, between a service provider and a group of consumers, and to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction, decision or order of TRAI.

National Sickle Cell Conclave: Minister of Tribal Affairs, Shri Arjun Munda, inaugurated the Second National Sickle Cell Conclave on the occasion of World Sickle Cell Awareness Day 2021 on June 19.

The aim of the webinar is to increase awareness in the community, the global burden of the Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) disorder and its prevalence in India.

About National Sickle Cell Conclave:

- The National Sickle Cell Conclave is held to mark world Sickle Cell Day every year.
- It was organized by Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Apollo Hospitals, Novartis, Piramal Foundation etc.
- The flagship event will bring together top government officials, stakeholders including Ministry of Tribal Affairs, FICCI, Novartis, Apollo Hospitals, Piramal Foundation, GASDCO, NASCO.
- The event will also include experts and clinicians to discuss ways and means to enhance awareness, prevention and management initiatives especially among women and children along with recent advances in SCD management.
- The program will include a panel discussion featuring leading clinicians, advocates and policy makers who are focused on delivering high-quality healthcare to people living with SCD.
- The conclave will visualize a roadmap for streamlining guidelines and for effective management of sickle cell disease
through Continuum of Care approach in India.

**SCD in India:**

- SCD is widespread amongst many tribal population groups in India.
- Several cost-effective interventions have reduced morbidity and mortality from SCD in India.
- However, access to care for SCD in tribal regions limited.
- SCD is prevalent predominantly in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, western Odisha, eastern Gujarat Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nilgiri Hills of north Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

**About Sickle cell disease (SCD):**

- Sickle cell anemia is a genetic red blood cell disorder.
- According to mayoclinic.org, people with sickle cell disorders don't have enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen throughout the body.
- SCD is a group of blood disorders that affect a person's red blood cells.
- It is a genetic condition that is passed on from parents.
- The disorder causes normal round and flexible blood cells to become stiff and sickle shaped, which in turn stops the blood cells and the oxygen they carry from moving freely around the body.

**World Sickle Cell Awareness Day 2021:**

- World Sickle Cell Day, observed every year on June 19.
- The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to recognize sickle cell disease as a public health problem on December 22, 2008.
- The main aim of observing this day is to raise awareness of sickle cell disorders.

**National Reading Day 2021: India celebrates its 26th National Reading Day on June 19, 2021.**

**Highlights:**

- The week following June 19 will be observed as Reading Week and the entire month till July 18 will be observed as Reading Month.
- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) celebrates National Reading Day annually on 19 June.
- The Day is celebrated to honour the father of the 'Library Movement in Kerala', the late P.N. Panicker, whose death anniversary falls on June 19.
- The P N Panicker Foundation has been observing the national reading day, reading week, and reading month since June 19, 1996.
- This year, the foundation has organized activities that motivate reading online due to the prevailing COVID 19 situation in the country.
Background:

- On June 19, 2017, Prime Minister launched the 22nd National Reading Month Celebrations and called for unity to spread the message of 'Read and Grow' among all the citizens of the country by 2022.

Additional info:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently announced the 'Young, Upcoming and Versatile Authors' scheme.
- This is a mentorship programme to train 75 young authors to celebrate India’s 75th Independence Day.
- Along with this, the government is expected to announce some initiative to celebrate National Reading Day India 2021.

About P N Panicker:

- Puthuvayil Narayana Panicker (1 March 1909 – 19 June 1995) is known as the "Father of the Library Movement" in the Indian state of Kerala.
- He promoted Kerala Association for Non-Formal Education and Development (KANFED), a non-formal education movement and institutions like Kerala Grandhasala Sangam (Kerala State Library Council).
- The activities that he initiated triggered a popular cultural movement in Kerala which led to universal literacy in the state in the 1990s.
- Kerala became the first total literate state of the country in 1991.

Cross-Disability Early Intervention Centres: Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot virtually inaugurated 14 Cross-Disability Early Intervention Centres located at 7 National Institutes and 7 Composite Regional Centres in New Delhi.

Highlights:

- These have been established under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- These have been setup at 7 National Institutes at Delhi, Mumbai, Dehradun, Secunderabad, Cuttack, Chennai and Kolkata and 7 Composite Regional Centres at Sundernagar, Lucknow, Patna, Bhopal, Rajnandgaon, Nellore and Kozhikode in the first phase.
- These 14 Centres will provide contiguous facilities for therapeutic, rehabilitative care services and pre-school training for children with disabilities (0-6 years) covering all types of disabilities covered under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- These services will be provided under a single roof with accessible and aesthetically designed environments.
Naftali Bennett: The 49-year-old leader of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett has become the new Prime Minister of Israel.

Highlights:

- The Israeli parliament Knesset elected him as the 13th Prime Minister by a 60-59 vote in the 120-member house.
- The Knesset voted on the new coalition government led by Mr. Bennett. His government has 27 ministers, nine of them women.
- Mr Bennett will be prime minister until September 2023 as part of a power-sharing deal. He will then hand power over to Yair Lapid for a further two years.
- With this win, he has ended 12 unbroken years of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the helm.

Background:

- An eight-party alliance, ranging from the right-wing Jewish Nationalist Yamina party to Arab lawmakers, was formed early this month by centrist politician Yair Lapid centrist and ultra-nationalist Bennett.

About Naftali Bennett:

- He is son of American-born parents who speaks perfect English.
- He is a religious Jew who began life with his parents in Haifa.
- He kept moving between North America and Israel for military service, law school and private sector.
- He is an ultra-nationalist and hard-right leader.
- He served in elite Sayeret Matkal commando unit after which he went to law school at Hebrew University.
- He co-founded an anti-fraud software company called Cyota in 1999.
- Cyota was sold to U.S.-based RSA Security in 2005.
- He is a religious-nationalist and a multi-millionaire
former tech entrepreneur who has also served as defence minister.

- He was driven into politics because of a bitter experience of Israel's 2006 war against Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

India and Israel Ties:

- India and Israel share a strong bilateral tie since 1950 with Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru reiterating his position to recognise Israel as a state.
- India's relationship with Israel has also grown during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration even though India abstaining from voting against Israel in United Nations on several resolutions.
- It is expected to grow with same pace in new regime as well.
- Currently, India is the largest buyer of Israeli military equipment while Israel is second-largest defence supplier to India after Russia.
- India is the third-largest Asian trade partner and tenth-largest trade partner overall of Israel.

About Israel:

- Israel formally known as the State of Israel is a country in Western Asia.
- It is located on the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the northern shore of the Red Sea.
- It is regarded as the biblical Holy Land by Jews, Muslims and christians.
- Its most sacred sites are in Jerusalem which is also the Capital of Israel.
- The currency used here is Israeli Shekel.
- The current President and Prime Minister of Israel are Isaac Herzog Prime Minister and Naftali Bennett respectively.
World Blood Donor Day 2021: World Blood Donor Day is observed on June 14 every year since 2005.

Highlights:

- The day is observed to express thanks to the blood donors worldwide while also encouraging more people to come forward to donate blood.
- The Day has the slogan ‘Share Life, Give Blood’, referring to the caring and cohesion that giving blood and caring for others involves.

Host for World Blood Donor Day 2021:

- The global event will take place in Rome on June 14, 2021.

- The host for this year's World Blood Donor Day 2021 is Italy through its National Blood Centre.

Theme of 2021:

- The theme of World Blood Donor Day 2021 is ‘Give blood and keep the world beating’.
- This theme highlights the importance of donating blood and how it can save people's lives around the world. This message is especially important at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a huge loss of human lives across the planet.

Objective of World Blood Donor Day 2021:

The objective of this year's campaign on World Blood Donor Day 2021 aims:

- To raise global awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products for transfusion and of the critical contribution of voluntary, unpaid donors make to national health systems.
• To thank blood donors of the world and create public awareness of the needy for regular, unpaid blood donation.
• To provide help to promote the community values of blood donation in enhancing community solidarity and social cohesion.
• To encourage youth to embrace the humanitarian call to donate blood and inspire others to do the same.
• To celebrate the potential of young people as partners in promoting health.
• To provide an opportunity to call to action to governments and national health authorities to provide adequate resources and put into place systems and infrastructures to increase the collection of blood from voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors.

World Blood Donor Day

• The birth anniversary of Karl Landsteiner is celebrated as World Blood Donor Day on June 14. This day was first initiated and established on June 14, 2004, by the World Health Organization (WHO) with its 192 member states at the 58th World Health Assembly.

• The World Blood Donor Day was first organized by the WHO in collaboration with Red Cross on June 14, 2005.

• Donor Day has been picked by many countries and is used to spread awareness about the life-saving importance of donating blood.

• The organization’s ultimate goal is for all counties to achieve all their blood stocks from voluntary unpaid donors.

World Blood Donor Day Significance:

Note: By donating blood you can save someone's life. Blood donation stimulates Blood Cell Production.
• World Blood Donor Day is observed to spread awareness of the need for voluntary blood donation.
• During these COVID times, people can do their part by donating blood at their nearest blood banks if they are fit to do so, or create awareness about the issue to encourage others to donate blood.
• India is one of those countries that experience the highest shortage of blood in the world.
• According to a study published in The Lancet, India falls short of 41 million units of blood annually.
• So in order to motivate the free and voluntary blood donors, World Blood Donor Day is an important campaign initiated by WHO.
• Unavailability of blood on time is what leads to the death of various patients every year.
• To save those lives, blood donation needs to be encouraged.

UN Trade Forum 2021: Union Minister Piyush Goyal recently attended UN Trade Forum 2021 where he put forward India’s renewed thrust to achieve climate goals in the post-COVID-19 world.

Highlights of the forum:
• At the forum, Piyush Goyal spoke about a clean environment and sustainable inclusive environment as the priority agenda of the country.
• He stated that India’s per capita CO2 emission is the lowest among the big economies of the world, and the country’s ambitious target of 450 Gigawatts by 2030 is the representation of commitment towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and
Sustainable Development Goals.
- He highlighted that, climate justice should be protected and developed countries should reconsider their pattern of consumption to bring about a sustainable lifestyle.
- According to minister, India has taken several steps on clean energy, energy efficiency, afforestation and bio-diversity.
- India has also encouraged global initiatives such as International Solar Alliance and coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

About UN Trade Forum:
- UN Trade Forum was established as a space for dialogue on how trade can be harnessed to get a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):
- SDG are collection of 17 interlinked global goals which are designed to be a blueprint of achieving a better and more sustainable future for all.
- SDGs were set up in 2015 by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- They are intended to be achieved by 2030.
- SDGs are included in UN Resolution called “2030 Agenda” these goals were developed in Post-2015 Development Agenda as future global development framework and replaced the Millennium Development Goals which ended in 2015.

NATO Summit 2021: The 31st formal meeting of heads of government of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was recently held on June 14, 2021 in Brussels, Belgium.

NATO summit 2021 is also being dubbed as Brussels summit of NATO.

Agenda of the meeting:
- Major topics under discussion include NATO’s role in a changing geostrategic environment, collective defence, emerging technologies, climate change and security, and other important issues.
- NATO Leaders took decisions about future of NATO and agreed on concrete measures to adapt NATO in accordance with NATO 2030 agenda.

About NATO:
- NATO is an acronym for North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
- It is an intergovernmental military alliance between 30 North American and European countries.
- The organization implements the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949.
- It is headquartered in Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium.

Background:
- On 4 March 1947, the Treaty of Dunkirk was signed by France and the United Kingdom as a Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance in the event of a possible attack by Germany or the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II.
- The US, Canada, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Portugal and Iceland joined the treaty in 1949.
- The first NATO military exercise was held in 1952.
- NATO was the first peacetime military alliance the United States entered into outside of the Western Hemisphere.

Members:
- Originally, NATO had 12 members which have increased to 30 now.
- Most recent member state is North Macedonia which was added to organization on March 27, 2020.
- Aspiring members include- Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine.
VivaTech 2021: Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the keynote address at the 5th edition of VivaTech on 16th June 2021 via video conferencing.

**Highlights:**

- The Prime Minister was invited as a Guest of Honour to deliver the keynote address at VivaTech 2021, one of the largest digital and startup events in Europe, held in Paris every year since 2016.
- Other prominent speakers in the event included the President of France Emmanuel Macron, Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sanchez and ministers and MPs from various European countries.
- The event also witnessed the participation of corporate leaders including Apple CEO Tim Cook, Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg and President, Microsoft Brad Smith.

**Details:**

Speaking on the occasion, PM Modi said that India and France have been working closely on a wide range of subjects. Among these, technology and digital are emerging areas of cooperation.

- Shri Modi mentioned Infosys providing tech support for the French Open tournament and collaboration involving French companies like Atos, Capgemini and India’s TCS and Wipro as examples of IT talent of the two countries serving companies and citizens all over the world.
- He pointed out that India implemented huge reforms across sectors, be it mining, space, banking, atomic energy and more during this period and that India is adaptable and agile even in the middle of the pandemic.
- He pointed out that where convention fails, innovation
helps. He said digital technology helped people cope, connect, comfort and console. Through digital media, people could work, talk with loved ones and help others.

- He stated that India offers what innovators and investors need. He invited the world to invest in India based on the following five pillars:
  1. Talent
  2. Market
  3. Capital
  4. Eco-system
  5. Culture of openness.

- He said India is home to one of the world’s largest start-up eco systems. Several unicorns have come up in the recent years.

- The Prime Minister said indigenous IT technologies helped our fight against COVID 19. While Arogya Setu enabled effective contact-tracing, CoWin platform helped ensure COVID Vaccines to millions.

- The Prime Minister praised the role of the start-up sector in meeting the challenge of the pandemic. The private sector played a key role in addressing the shortage of PPE kits, masks, testing kits etc. Doctors adopted tele-medicine in a big way so that some COVID and other non-COVID issues could be addressed virtually.

- He said two vaccines are being made in India and more are in the development or trial stage.

- Mr Modi added that Aadhaar helped provide timely support to people during pandemic and free ration, and cooking fuel was delivered to people.

- He said two public digital education programes-Swayam and Diksha – were operationalised in quick time to help students.

- Prime Minister stressed the need for insulating planet against the next pandemic. He said focus on sustainable life-styles must be ensured that stop
ecological degradation. He called upon the start-up community to take the lead in working with collective spirit and a human centric approach to overcome this challenge.

- Talking about the disruption in different sector over the past year, the Prime Minister insisted that disruption does not have to mean despair. Instead, the focus should be kept on the twin foundations of repair and prepare. “This time last year, the world was still seeking a vaccine.

About VivaTech:

- VivaTech is one of the largest digital and startup events in Europe, held in Paris every year since 2016.
- It is jointly organized by Publicis Groupe - a prominent advertising and marketing conglomerate and Les Echos - a leading French media group.
- The event brings together stakeholders in technology innovation and the startup ecosystem and includes exhibitions, awards, panel discussions and startup contests.

Biden-Putin Summit: U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin have ended their summit in Geneva, chosen as a location for the talks for its history of political neutrality.

Highlights:

Both sides have highlighted opportunities for cooperation but neither expected much improvement in tense relations between Moscow and Washington.

Discussions included arms control and US allegations of Russian cyber-attacks.

However, no major breakthroughs were expected but there were hopes of finding small areas of agreement.
Key takeaways from Biden-Putin Summit:

Putin, the first to deliver a solo press conference following their talks, said there was "no hostility" on either side and even went out of his way to flatter Biden, calling him a "very balanced, professional man."

Biden also called the summit "positive" and declared it a success at his later news conference, saying, "I did what I came to do."

Both expressed a desire for a better relationship, but announced no dramatic actions to arrest the downward spiral that has already hurtled them toward the worst U.S.-Russian tensions since the Cold War.

Both men called their meeting positive, but while Biden said he raised serious concerns and warned of consequences, he did not claim he got Putin to commit to changing his behavior and the Russian leader accepted no responsibility for cyberattacks on the U.S. or for anything else.

Backdrop:

- US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin had held a high-stakes summit at an 18th-century Swiss villa, Villa La Grange in Geneva on June 16, 2021.
- US President Joe Biden reached Geneva before his first summit with Vladimir Putin amid the escalation of tension between Russia and USA in recent years.
- Biden flew to Geneva after mending relations with Washington’s closest allies during NATO and G7 summits in Brussels and Britain.
- This was Biden's first meeting with Putin after he took oath as President of the United States.
- He has become the fifth US President to meet the Russian President.
- The meeting comes at a time when the US-Russia relationship is at one of its lowest points.

US-Russia Relation:

- Relationship between United States (US) and
Russia is among most critical bilateral relationships worldwide.

- Both the countries have shared interests in diverse set of areas including nuclear security & non-proliferation, countering terrorism & violent extremism, regional security in Europe & Eurasia, and managing upheaval in greater Middle East.
- Russia is also an important partner in U.S. efforts to combat climate change and space exploration.

What are the concerns?

- United States is critical to Russia as they foil and partner in their efforts to come at global centre stage.
- Bilateral relations have been rotating between periods of cooperation and confrontation for more than two decades.
- However, tensions related to conflicts in Ukraine and Syria are troubling the relation.

World Sickle Cell Day: World Sickle Cell Day is observed every year on June 19 globally.

- The main aim of observing this day is to raise awareness of sickle cell disorders.
- The day also highlights the treatment, whether surgical or medicinal, that is available for the patient that is suffering from sickle cell disease.

History:

- The United Nations General Assembly, on December 22, 2008, adopted a resolution recognizing sickle cell disease as a public health problem.
- The UN designated June 19 of every year as World Sickle Cell Awareness Day in order to raise awareness about the disorder on the
national and international level.

- Sickle cell disease makes normal life difficult and patients need regular blood transfusions.

**About Sickle cell disease (SCD):**

- Sickle cell anemia is a genetic red blood cell disorder.
- According to the mayoclinic.org., people with sickle cell disorders don’t have enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen throughout the body.
- SCD is a group of blood disorders that affect a person’s red blood cells.
- It is a genetic condition that is passed on from parents.
- The disorder causes normal round and flexible blood cells to become stiff and sickle shaped, which in turn stops the blood cells and the oxygen they carry from moving freely around the body.

**Symptoms of sickle cell disorder:**

- Signs and symptoms of sickle cell anemia usually appear around five months of age and they vary from person to person and may change over time.
- Patients with sickle cell disorder suffer from anemia as their red blood cells die easily leading to shortage of healthy cells.
- The body does not get enough oxygen without adequate red blood cells and this causes fatigue.
- Episodes of pain are a major symptom of sickle cell anemia but it varies from person to person.
- It can last for a few hours to a few weeks.
- Swelling of hands and feet and frequent infections are common.
- Shortage of healthy red blood cells can lead to slower growth in children.

**India Polity**
Eighth Schedule to the Constitution:
Various organizations recently initiated a Twitter campaign.

The twitter campaign was initiated to demand official language status to Tulu in Karnataka and Kerala and include it in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.

About Tulu:
- Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in two coastal districts Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- The native speakers of Tulu are referred to as Tuluva or Tulu people and the geographical area is unofficially called Tulu Nadu.
- The Indian census report of 2011 reported a total of 1,846,427 native Tulu speakers in India while the 2001 census had reported a total of 1,722,768 native speakers.

Features:
- Separated early from Proto-South Dravidian, Tulu has several features not found in Tamil–Kannada. For example, it has the past perfect and the future perfect, like French or Spanish, but formed without an auxiliary verb.

Status:
- At present, Tulu is not an official language in the country.
- Efforts are being made to include Tulu in the eighth schedule of the Constitution.

Tulu art, culture and cinema:
Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition with folk-song forms like paddana, and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.

Tulu also has an active tradition of cinema with around 5 to 7 Tulu language movies produced a year.

Constitutional provisions relating to Eighth Schedule:
- The Constitutional provisions relating to the Eighth Schedule occur in article 344(1) and 351 of the Constitution.
- Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of ten years from such commencement.
- Article 351 of the Constitution provides that it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule.
What is the List of languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution?

The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the following 22 languages:

1. Assamese,
2. Bengali,
3. Gujarati,
4. Hindi,
5. Kannada,
6. Kashmiri,
7. Konkani,
8. Malayalam,
9. Manipuri,
10. Marathi,
11. Nepali,
12. Oriya,
13. Punjabi,
14. Sanskrit,
15. Sindhi,
16. Tamil,
17. Telugu,
18. Urdu,
19. Bodo,
20. Santhali,
21. Maithili and
22. Dogri.

Note:

Fourteen languages were initially included in the Constitution.

Sindhi language was added in 1967.

Thereafter three more languages viz., Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992.

Subsequently Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added in 2004.

Lok Janshakti Party (LJP): Pashupati Kumar Paras, brother of Ram Vilas Paswan, was recently elected unopposed as the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) national president.

Highlights:

- He replaced Chirag Paswan who is the son of Ram Vilas Paswan.
- Chirag Paswan was removed from the post of Lok Janshakti Party national president after an emergency meeting of the LJP national working committee.
- The decision was taken at a meeting of five LJP MPs at the residence of Pashupati Kumar Paras in Delhi.
- The five LJP MPs had met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and
handed over a letter to him regarding the removal of party chief Chirag Paswan from the position of Lok Sabha Parliamentary party leader.

**About LJP:**
- LJP is currently a part of the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre.
- This party was formed by the late Ram Vilas Paswan in 2000.
- Paswan, a heavyweight leader in Bihar politics passed away in October 2020.

**About Pashupati Paras:**
- Pashupati Paras is an Indian politician from the state of Bihar.
- He is currently serving as a member of Lok Sabha from Hajipur (Lok Sabha constituency). And he was Minister for Animal and Fish Resources Department in the Government of Bihar.
- He has been a member of Bihar Legislative Assembly from Alauli since 1977.
- He has earlier served thrice as a minister in the state.
- He is the younger brother of late Ram Vilas Paswan and also the State President of the Bihar unit of Lok Janshakti Party.


**Highlights:**
- The Atlas on General Elections 2019 was released by Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey.
- This atlas would inspire academicians and researchers to further explore the vast landscape of the Indian elections.

**About General Elections 2019: An Atlas:**
- The Atlas encompasses all the data and statistical figures of this monumental event.
- It has 42 thematic maps and 90 tables depicting various facets of the elections.
- It shares interesting facts, anecdotes and legal provisions related to the Indian elections.
- It comprises of data of electors belonging to different categories through comparison charts like Elector Gender Ratio and electors in different age categories.
- It highlights information regarding smallest and largest parliamentary constituency with respect to candidates or electors.
- It also highlights the performance of political parties.
- It also compares the number of candidates contesting in General Elections since 1951.

**Note:** Since the first General Elections in 1951-52, the Commission has been
publishing compilation of electoral data in the form of narrative and statistical books.

Statistics:

- As per atlas, lowest gender gap was witnessed during the 17th General Elections conducted in 2019 were the largest democratic exercise in human history which witnessed the participation of 61.468 crore voters at 10.378 lakh polling stations spread over 32 lakh square kilometer territory of India.
- In the 23 States and UTs women voting percentage was more than the male voting percentage.
- The Elector Gender Ratio which has shown a positive trend since 1971 was 926 in 2019 General Elections.
- The Election Commission of India set up over 10 lakh polling stations in General Elections 2019 with the lowest number of electors per polling station (365) in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The overall polling percentage in the last parliamentary election, including postal ballots, was 67.4%, which is the highest ever turnout in a Lok Sabha poll.

Preparations of Statistical Reports in India:

- In Indian elections, electoral data is primarily collected during the preparation of Electoral Roll by the Electoral Registration Officers and also in the process of conduct of elections by the Returning Officers.
- This data is then collated by these statutory authorities.

- Thereafter, after the culmination of the electoral process, the Election Commission of India collects this electoral data and prepares various reports for compilation, record and dissemination purposes.

What are the benefits of the Atlas on General Elections?

- This Atlas provides information for better understanding of Indian electoral diversity and provides insights into electoral patterns across different levels.
- It will serve as an illustrative and informative document which will help in understanding nuances of Indian electoral process and help in analyzing changes & trends in India.

Persons in News

Rebecca Grynspan: UN General Assembly (UNGA) has approved the nomination of Rebecca Grynspan to head the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Highlights:
• She is an Economist from Costa Rica.
• She will be the first woman and Central American to lead Geneva-based organisation, UNCTAD.
• She was nominated as secretary-general of UNCTAD by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

**Background:**

• Since 2014, Rebecca Grynspan has been secretary-general of Ibero-American General Secretariat.
• This secretariat supports preparations for Ibero-American summits.
• She has also worked as deputy administrator of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) from 2010 to 2014.
• She previously served as UNDP’s regional director for Latin America and Caribbean, a member of the high-level panel on financing for development, and second vice president of Costa Rica from 1994 to 1998.

**About UNCTAD:**

• UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) was established as permanent intergovernmental body in 1964.
• It is a part of United Nations Secretariat that deals in trade, investment, and developmental issues.
• It seeks to maximize trade, investment and development opportunities in developing countries and assist them in integrating into world economy on equitable basis.
• It was established by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It reports to UN General Assembly and United Nations Economic & Social Council.

**Kofi Annan Changemakers 2021:**
Zeinorin Stephen Angkang a resident of Ukhrul district in Manipur, has been selected as one of the world’s 12 most inspirational young leaders for Kofi Annan Changemakers 2021.

**Highlights:**

• 29 year old Zenorin’s work has been admired and appreciated across sectors.
• She has been working with the farmers of Ukhrul and her vision for the indigenous farmers playing huge role in food security and transforming community is what stands out.
• She will represent India as one of the twelve recognised international leaders to participate in a six month inter-generational dialogue hosted by the Kofi Annan Foundation.
• The others chosen for Kofi Annan Changemakers 2021 dialogue are from Ghana, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Philippines, Zimbabwe, Kosovo, Columbia, Malaysia, Malawi, Ghana and Uganda.
• The six month-long Kofi Annan Foundation’s intergenerational dialogue for impact will start on June 28, 2021, in Geneva, Switzerland.
• The twelve young leaders, who have already demonstrated commitment and impact in their respective fields, will interact with leaders from the high-level network of Kofi Annan and the Kofi Annan Foundation, searching for ways to build their capacity for positive action, said the Foundation.

About Zeinorin:
• Zeinorin is married to Leiyalon Vashum, and the couple founded Hill Wild Pvt Ltd, a chocolate and confectionery making unit at Ukhru in 2017.
• In 2020, she was recognized in Rome by The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), an institution and a specialized agency of the United Nations for the remarkable work she has been doing.

About Kofi Annan Changemaker 2021:
• Kofi Annan Changemaker 2021 is an initiative to create and provide an environment where the next generation of leaders can seek counsel from experienced individuals on how to strengthen the impact of their work as they also become torchbearers of Kofi Annan’s values and principles.

Justice AK Sikri: He is a former Supreme Court Justice (Retd.) Arjan Kumar Sikri who has been roped by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) to chair the Grievance Redressal Board (GRB), formed as a part of the Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council (DPCGC).
• The GRB will address content grievances pertaining to any of the DPCGC member’s video streaming services.
• With the addition of Apple, BookMyShow Stream, Eros Now, and Reeldrama, the DPCGC currently has 14 publishers of online curated content as members.
• Others include which include Amazon Prime Video, Alt Balaji, Firework TV, Hoichoi, Hungama, Lionsgate Play, MX Player, Netflix, Shemaroo, and Ullu.

About GRB:
• The Grievance Redressal Board (GRB) will aim to provide independent adjudication on content grievances escalated to it.
• The members of the GRB include prominent personalities from the media and entertainment industry, online curated content providers,
experts from various fields — including child rights, women rights, and media laws.

- The GRB includes National award-winning actress Suhasini Maniratnam; Madhu Bhojwani, Indian film Producer and Partner at Emmay Entertainment and Motion Pictures; Gopal Jain, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India; and Dr Ranjana Kumari, eminent Civil Society Representative who currently serves as the Director of the Centre for Social Research and as the Chairperson of Women Power Connect.

- The two members from the Online Curated Content Providers are Amit Grover, Senior Corporate Counsel, Amazon India, and Priyanka Chaudhari, Director-legal, Netflix India.

About IAMAI:

- Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) is a not-for-profit industry body registered under the Societies Act, 1896.

- IAMAI is a specialized industry body in India representing the interests of online and mobile value added services industry.

- It is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- It was founded in 2004.

- The current Chairman of the IAMAI is Amit Agarwal.

Mukesh Sharma: Mukesh Sharma, a faculty at IIT Kanpur, has recently been appointed as an honorary member of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Global Air Pollution and Health – Technical Advisory Group (GAPH-TAG).

- Members of the Technical Advisory Group are selected across the globe and appointed by the Director-General, WHO.

- Sharma who is associated with the civil engineering department at IIT Kanpur and an air quality expert has melded rigorous research with policy engagement.

About the Technical Advisory Group (TAG):

- The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is an advisory body to provide technical guidance and inputs to support the WHO’s efforts and work in the fields of air pollution and health issues.

- It also helps with how member countries could achieve the sustainable development goals (SDG) related to air pollution and health such as SDGs 3.9.1, 7.1.2 and 11.6.2.

- The United Nations adopted the SDGs in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and
prosperity for the people and the planet.

Margherita Hack: On June 12, 2021 Google Doodle celebrated Italian astrophysicist and scientific disseminator Margherita Hack using an animated graphic on her 99th birth anniversary.

- The doodle shows “Hack sitting on her chair and looking into her telescope”.

About Margherita Hack:

- Margherita Hack was an Italian astrophysicist and scientific disseminator. She discovered asteroid 8558 Hack in 1995 which was named in her honour.
- She was born on June 12, 1922, in Florence.
- In between 1964 to 1992, she was full professor of astronomy at the University of Trieste.
- She was the first Italian woman to administrate Trieste Astronomical Observatory.
- She worked at many American and European observatories and was a member of working groups of European Space Agency (ESA) as well as NASA.
- She died in 2013 when she was 91.

Awards and honours

- Margherita Hack was awarded with Targa Giuseppe Piazzi in 1994 for her scientific research. She also received Cortina Ulisse Prize for scientific dissemination in 1995.
- She was honoured with title of Dama di Gran Croce, which is the highest award given by Italian government.

Obituaries:

Veteran Athlete Milkha Singh: Indian Athlete Milkha Singh passed away at the age of 91 due to Covid-19 related complications on June 18, 2021.

About Milkha Singh:

- Captain Milkha Singh, the legendary athlete popularly known as The Flying Sikh, was an Indian track and field sprinter.
- He was introduced to sport while serving the Indian Army.
- He is the only athlete who won gold in 400 metres race at Asian Games & Commonwealth Games.
- He also represented India in 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne, 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome and 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.
He was conferred India's fourth-highest civilian honour, Padma Shri for his sporting achievements.

**Why Milkha Singh is called as Flying Sikh?**

- During the 1960 Olympic Games, he finished to fourth-place in 400 metres final.
- Several records were broken in race.
- He finished to fourth-place in 45.73 seconds which was an Indian national record for almost 40 years.

**Swami Shivamayanandaji:** PM Modi expressed grief over the demise of Swami Shivamayanandaji Maharaj, vice-president of Ramakrishna Math and mission.

- He passed away at the age of 86 due to COVID complications.
- He was actively involved in a wide range of community service initiatives focused on social empowerment.

**About Ramakrishna Mission:**

- Ramakrishna Mission (RKM) is a Hindu religious and spiritual organisation which forms the core of a worldwide spiritual movement known as the Ramakrishna Movement or the Vedanta Movement.
- The mission is named after and inspired by the Indian saint Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.
- This mission was founded by Ramakrishna's chief disciple Swami Vivekananda on 1 May 1897.
- The headquarters of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission are situated at an area named Belur in the district of Howrah, West Bengal, India.
- The entire campus of the headquarters is popularly known as ‘Belur Math’.
- Vedanta (also known as Uttara Mīmāṃsā) is one of the six (āstika) schools of Hindu philosophy.
- Literally meaning "end of the Vedas", Vedanta reflects ideas that emerged from the philosophies contained in the Upanishads.

**CHANA Pawl:** Zion-a Chana, patriarch of a Christian cult who held the world record for being the head of the “world’s largest family”, passed away at Aizawl in Mizoram.

He was 76.

**About:**
Ziona was the leader of Chana pâwl, a polygamy-practising Christian sect.

Chana headed the Chana Pawl, a cult that his father, Khuangtuaha, had founded in June 1942.

The cult believes in polygamy and has about 2,000 members, most of them living in the self-sustaining Baktawng Tlangnuam.

Chana had 181 members living under one roof — his 39 wives, 94 children, 33 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti Abhiyan:
Madhya Pradesh (MP) government recently announced that it will launch ‘Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti Abhiyan’ to raise awareness among people on covid-19 pandemic.

About Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti Abhiyan:
- Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti Abhiyan means “free from corona with the help of youth power campaign”.
- Under the campaign, college teachers and about 16 lakh students will be made aware of covid-19 infection by teaching them Covid appropriate behaviour and vaccination.
- This campaign will be run by Higher Education and Technical Education Department in association with Public Health and Family Welfare Department.
- For effective real-time monitoring of campaign, mobile app has also been developed.

Covid-19 cases in MP:
- Madhya Pradesh is at 26th position in India in terms of corona infection.
- The state is witnessing less than 500 cases in 24 hours for some days now.
- Not a single case has been reported in twenty districts. Bhopal, Indore and Jabalpur witnessed cases in double digits. State is carrying about 80 thousand tests daily while the recovery rate has reached 98.3 percent.

Madhya Pradesh:
- Madhya Pradesh (MP) is the second largest Indian state by area.
- It borders the states of Uttar Pradesh to the northeast, Chhattisgarh to the southeast, Maharashtra to the south, Gujarat to the west, and Rajasthan to the northwest.
- Its capital is Bhopal.
- The current Chief Minister and Governor of Madhya Pradesh is Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Anandiben Patel respectively.
Heritage Trees: The Maharashtra government recently announced that it will make amendments to the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection and Preservation of Trees Act of 1975, to introduce provisions for the protection of 'heritage trees'.

Key Points:

- Under the proposed amendment, a tree with an estimated age of 50 years or more shall be defined as a heritage tree.
- It may belong to specific species, which will be notified from time to time.
- In addition to the age, the state climate change department (which will be implementing the Tree Act), will also consider a tree’s rarity, its botanical, historical, religious, mythological and cultural importance in defining a heritage tree.
- The local Tree Authority will have to ensure tree census to be carried out every five years along with counting of heritage trees.

Maharashtra:

- Maharashtra is a state in the western peninsular region of India occupying a substantial portion of the Deccan Plateau. It is bordered by the Arabian Sea to the west, the Indian states of Karnataka and Goa to the south, Telangana to the southeast and Chhattisgarh to the east, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh to the north, and the Indian union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu to the northwest.
- It was formed on 1 May 1960. It was formed by merging the western and south-western parts of the Bombay State, Berar and Vidarbha, and the north-western parts of the Hyderabad State and splitting Saurashtra (in present-day Gujarat) by the States Reorganisation Act.
- Its capital is Mumbai.
- The Chief Minister and the Governor of Maharashtra are Uddhav Thackeray and Bhagat Singh Koshyari respectively.

Vedic Education and Sanskar Board:

The Congress government in Rajasthan has announced that it will set up a Vedic Education and Sanskar Board to revive the knowledge of ancient Sanskrit scriptures and connect the learnings of the Vedas with science and yoga.

Highlights:

- The board is likely to be set up in the coming four to five months.
The ruling Congress had promised the establishment of the Vedic Education and Sanskar Board as well as steps to promote Sanskrit language and education in its manifesto for the 2018 State Assembly election.

Rajasthan:
- Rajasthan is a state in northern India. It comprises most of the wide and inhospitable Thar Desert (also known as the "Great Indian Desert").
- It shares a border with the Pakistani provinces of Punjab to the northwest and Sindh to the west, along the Sutlej-Indus river valley.
- It became a State after 1947 when the princely states and chiefships were integrated into India in stages, and the state took the name Rajasthan.
- It assumed its present form on November 1, 1956, when the States Reorganization Act came into force.
- The Capital of Rajasthan is Jaipur.
- The current Chief Minister and Governor of Rajasthan is Ashok Gehlot and Kalraj Mishra respectively.

Dagmara HE Project: The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bihar State Hydroelectric Power Corporation (BSHPC) for Implementation of 130.1 MW Dagmara HE Project.

Key Points:
- It would come up on Kosi River in Suapul district, Bihar.
- The project will be located near village Bhaptiahi on the left bank, about 31 km downstream of Bhimnagar barrage on Kosi River.
- The 130.1 MW Dagmara HE Project, the largest hydropower project of Bihar is to be implemented by NHPC on ownership basis.

NHPC:
- NHPC Limited (erstwhile National Hydroelectric Power Corporation) is an Indian government hydropower board under the ownership of Ministry of Power, Government of India (GoI).
- It was founded in 1975.
- At present, NHPC Ltd is a Mini-Ratna Category-I Enterprise of the Government of India.
- NHPC Limited was incorporated with an objective to plan, promote and organise an integrated and efficient development of hydroelectric power in all aspects.
- Later on NHPC expanded its objects to include other sources of energy like Solar, Geothermal, Tidal, Wind etc.

Bihar:
- Bihar is a state in East India, bordering Nepal.
- It is surrounded by Uttar Pradesh in the west, Nepal in the north,
northern part of West Bengal in the east and Jharkhand in the south.

- It was formed on 22nd March 1912.
- The capital of Bihar is Patna.
- The current Governor and the Chief Minister of Bihar are Phagu Chauhan and Nitish Kumar respectively.

Chennai–Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India have recently signed a $484 million loan to improve transport connectivity and facilitate industrial development in the Chennai–Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC) in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Note: CKIC is part of India’s East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC), which stretches from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu.

What is an industrial corridor?

- An industrial corridor is basically a corridor consisting of multi-modal transport services that would pass through the states as main arteries.
- Industrial corridors offer effective integration between industry and infrastructure, leading to overall economic and social development.

Industrial corridors constitute world-class infrastructure, such as:
- High-speed transportation network – rail and road.
- Ports with state-of-the-art cargo handling equipment.
- Modern airports.
- Special economic regions/industrial areas.
- Logistic parks/transhipment hubs.
- Knowledge parks focused on catering to industrial needs.
- Complementary infrastructure such as townships/real estate.

Significance of Industrial corridors:

- Enhanced connectivity of industrial hubs with hinterland and ports will particularly help increase the participation of Indian manufacturing in global production networks and global value chains, thereby creating jobs along the corridor.

Industrial Corridor Projects Approved by GoI:

Following eleven industrial corridor projects have been identified and approved for development by the Government of India (GoI):

- Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)
- Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)
- Extension of CBIC to Kochi via Coimbatore
- Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)
- Bengaluru Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC)
- Hyderabad Nagpur Industrial Corridor (HNIC)
- Hyderabad Warangal Industrial Corridor (HWIC)
- Hyderabad Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (HBIC)
- East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) with Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) as Phase-1
- Odisha Economic Corridor (OEC)
- Delhi Nagpur Industrial Corridor (DNIC)

The development of these eleven industrial corridor projects will be implemented through the National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT).

Nutrient Based Subsidy: The Union Cabinet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave its approval for nutrient based subsidy and Inland Vessel Bill.

Highlights:

- Among other key decisions, the Cabinet has also approved higher nutrient-based subsidy rates for phosphatic and potassic fertilizer for 2021-22.
- This was announced by Mansukh Laxmanbhai Mandaviya, the Union Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Union Minister of State for Chemical and Fertilizers, along with Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The subsidy is released to fertilizer companies as per NBS rates so that they can make available fertilizers to farmers at affordable price.

Nutrient Based Subsidy Rates:

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal of the Department of Fertilizers for fixation of ‘Nutrient Based Subsidy Rates’ for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) Fertilizers for the year 2021-22.
- This historic decision by the Modi Government for the farmers seeks to benefit the farmers by providing fertilizer at a reasonable price amid the pandemic..
- The Government provides Rs 900 subsidy on every packet of Urea.
- The government also hiked subsidy by Rs 700 per bag of Complex fertilisers like di-ammonia phosphate (DAP).
- From now, every bag of DAP would be priced at Rs 2,400.
• For this, the government would spend an additional Rs 14,000 crore on increase subsidy support.
• Prior to taking this decision, the government in May increased its share of subsidy for DAP by 140 per cent from Rs 500 to Rs 1,200 per bag.
• With this, the government rolled back the steep 58 per cent hike in prices announced by companies since April.

Background:
• The NBS (Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme) programme for fertilizer was initiated in 2010.
• Under this scheme, the fixed amount of subsidy on an annual basis is provided on each grade of subsidized Phosphatic and Pottaslic (P&K) fertilizers except for Urea, based on the nutrients like Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Sulphur, and Potassium and micronutrients contained in these fertilizers.
• These secondary nutrients are very important for the growth and development for crops.
• Apart from this, fertilizers which are fortified with secondary and micronutrients such as molybdenum (Mo) and zinc are given additional subsidy.
• Under this Policy, the subsidy on Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers is announced by the Government on an annual basis for each nutrient on a per kg basis.
• These rates are determined taking into account the international and domestic prices of P&K fertilizers, exchange rate, inventory level in the country etc.
• The scheme is being implemented by the Department of Fertilizers.
• Urea, in India, is the only controlled fertilizer and is sold at a statutory notified uniform sale price.

Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021: The Central Government on 17 June 2021 amended the Cable Television Network Rules to redress the grievances and complaints of citizens "relating to content broadcast by television channels".

Key Highlights:
• The Information and Broadcasting Ministry issued notification amending the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 thereby providing a statutory mechanism for redressal of grievances/complaints of citizens relating to content broadcast by television channels in accordance with the provisions of the Cable Television Network Act, 1995.
• Currently, there are over 900 TV channels that are required to comply with the Programme and Advertising Code laid down by the
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting under the Cable Television Network Rules.

- The amended Cable Television Network Rules gives a statutory pedestal to self-regulatory bodies like News Broadcasters Standards Authority (NBSA) and Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC).

Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021:

- The Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021 provides for a three-level grievance redressal mechanism —
  1. Self-regulation by broadcasters,
  2. Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters
  3. Oversight by an Inter-Departmental Committee at the level of the Union government.

- A viewer can file a complaint directly to the broadcaster, who will have to respond within 15 days. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the complaint can be escalated to the self-regulating bodies set up by TV channels, which should deal with the case in 60 days.
- Such appeals will be dealt with by the Inter-Departmental Committee set up under the Oversight Mechanism.
- Inter-Departmental Committee will be headed by the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and have members from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Defence (MoD), and representatives of other Ministries and organisations, including experts, as the Centre may decide.
- This third tier is not only kept aside to hear the appeals, it can take up complaints that come directly to the Centre.

- At present, there is an institutional mechanism by way of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to address the grievances of citizens relating to the violation of the Programme/Advertising Codes under the Rules, but it does not have statutory backing.

- After examining the complaints, the Inter-Departmental Committee can recommend the Centre to advise, issue a warning, censure, admonish or reprimand a broadcaster, or seek an apology. It can also ask the broadcaster to include a warning card or a disclaimer, or to delete or modify content, or take the channel or a programme off-air for a specified time period, where it is satisfied that such action is warranted.
**Project O2 for India:** The Government of India (GoI) has recently launched the 'Project O2 for India'.

**Key Points:**

- Project O2 for India is an initiative of the Office of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA), GoI.
- The Project O2 for India has been launched by office of Principal Scientific Adviser to enable stakeholders who are working to augment India’s ability to meet surge in demand for medical oxygen.

**Aim:**

- The project was launched with an aim to ensure supply of critical raw materials like zeolites, manufacturing of compressors and setting up of small oxygen plants to meet the potential increase in demand due to further waves of the pandemic and to increase the country’s ability to meet the rise in demand for medical oxygen.

**Key Features of the Project O2 for India:**

- Under the Project, a National Consortium of Oxygen has been set up.
- The Consortium will enable adequate national level supply of critical raw materials like zeolites under this project.
- It would also set up small oxygen plants, manufacture compressors and final products like oxygen plants, concentrators & ventilators.
- It will look forward to provide immediate short-term relief as well as work to strengthen manufacturing ecosystem in long-term.
- A committee of experts has been constituted to evaluate critical equipment like concentrators, oxygen plants and ventilators from India-based start-ups, manufacturers and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- Manufacturing and supply consortium includes Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Tata Consulting Engineers (TCE), IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, IIT Hyderabad, IIT Bombay and more than 40 MSMEs.

**About The Office of PSA, GoI:**

- In November 1999, Cabinet Secretariat established the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India (GoI).
- The PSA’s office aims to provide pragmatic and objective advice to the Prime Minister and cabinet on matters related to science, technology and innovation with a focus on application of science and technology in critical infrastructure, economic and social sectors in partnership with Government departments, institutions and industry.
- The first PSA was APJ Abdul Kalam and the current PSA is K. VijayRaghavan.
- The 9 member Prime Minister’s Science, Technology And Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) is headed by GoI’s Principal Scientific Adviser to (K. Vijay Raghavan).
Child Labour on PENCIL Portal: On the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour, Union MCD minister appealed to Citizens to report the instances of Child Labour on PENCIL Portal or by calling on Childline-1098.

About World Day Against Child Labour:

- The World Day Against Child Labour is observed on 12th June every year around the world.
- It is observed to spread awareness about the practice of hiring minor children for labour and also encourages people to speak against this social evil practice.
- This day also helps in educating these kids parents that employing a child is morally and illegally wrong.

History:

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002. The ILO focuses on the right to education for all children across the globe, regardless of their race, economic condition or caste.

Theme of 2021:

- This year the theme of this special day is "Act now: End Child Labour".
- The 2021 World Day Against Child Labour focuses on action taken for the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

It is the first World Day since the universal ratification of the ILO’s Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for ending child labour in all its forms by 2025.

About PENCIL Portal:

- The full form of PENCIL is Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour.
- PENCIL Portal was launched in 2017 by The Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- It is a separate online portal launched with an objective to ensure effective enforcement of the provisions of the Child Labour Act and smooth implementation of the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme.
- The PENCIL Portal (pencil.gov.in) has various components, namely Child Tracking System, Complaint Corner, State Government, National Child Labour Project and Convergence.
Sankalp Se Siddhi – Mission Van Dhan:
Minister for Tribal Affairs Shri Arjun Munda recently launched the tribal livelihoods initiative “Sankalp Se Siddhi – Mission Van Dhan”.

Highlights:

- Along with the above initiative the Union Minister also launched 7 new Tribes India Outlets, Van Dhan website and software application, coffee table book and a new TRIFED Headoffice in New Delhi.
- These initiatives were launched in hybrid mode i.e. physically as well as virtually.
- Keeping in line with the Prime Minister’s clarion call Vocal for Local and to build and Atmanirbhar Bharat, TRIFED has been coming up with several initiatives, all aimed at sustainable livelihoods for our tribal population.

About Sankalp Se Siddhi – Mission Van Dhan:

- The mission was launched to promote local products made by tribal artisans in order to ensure the long-term livelihood of India’s tribal population.
- Tribal people will benefit from new job opportunities and will be able to start their own businesses as a result of this.
- TRIFED now plans to expand its operations through convergence of various schemes of different Ministries and Departments and launch the various tribal development programs in Mission Mode under “Sankalp Se Siddhi – Mission Van Dhan” for expediting its implementation in a Mission mode.
- Through this mission, establishment of 50,000 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, 3000 Haat Bazaars, 600 Godowns, 200 Mini TRIFOOD Units, 100 Common Facility Centres, 100 TRIFOOD parks, 100 SFURTI clusters, 200 Tribes India retail stores, ecommerce platforms for TRIFOOD and Tribes India brands is being targeted.
- All of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs’ schemes will now be accessible through a single platform.

ADI PRASHIKSHAN portal: Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Arjun Munda recently launched ADI PRASHIKSHAN portal.

Highlights:

- Adi Prashikshan-Training for Tribals is an initiative to reach the remotest area using information
technology so that tribal communities are able to have access to their rights and benefits.

- This portal has been developed by the Tribal Affairs Ministry in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme.
- Its aim is to provide comprehensive information on training programmes held across the country.
- It is an effort to bring Training Institutions, Organizations, Experts and Trainers together.
- It would act as a Central Repository of all training programs conducted by Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs), different divisions of Ministry, National Society for Education of Tribal Students (NESTS), Centre of Excellences (CoEs) funded by Ministry of Tribal Affairs and National Tribal Research Institute.
- It will catalyze and improve the processes of conducting training by making it online and accessible to all.
- Unified open platform will give users access to authentic knowledge products.

**Monoclonal Antibody:** Monoclonal antibody treatment has emerged as a relatively effective and safer alternative in treating COVID-19 patients.

**Key Points:**

- As per the statement of the doctors, as with any other drug, timing is very important for the administration of the therapy that's touted as a game changer.
- Monoclonal antibodies have previously been used to treat infections such as Ebola and HIV.
- The therapy is now said to help avoid hospitalization in high-risk groups, progression to severe disease, and to reduce the usage of steroids.
- However, doctors claim that though the method does not cure the infection, the treatment helps in preventing the development of Covid-19 severity among mild to moderately infected patients with severe comorbidities, if administered within seven days of the infection.

**Immune response of antibodies in human beings:**

- Antibodies produced naturally in bodies fight against diseases.
The body’s immune system generates antibodies as a defense mechanism against unfamiliar molecules from bacteria and viruses, termed antigens. Antibodies bind to antigens and kill the invading pathogen.

**Monoclonal antibody treatment:**

Monoclonal antibody therapy is a form of immunotherapy that uses monoclonal antibodies (mAb) to bind monospecifically to certain cells or proteins.

- Monoclonal antibodies too, work similarly as the naturally produced antibodies in a human body, but these are made artificially in a laboratory that helps in defending against the disease.
- The Monoclonal antibodies help in reducing the symptoms and disease progression.
- These antibodies have previously been used to treat viral infections such as Ebola and HIV.
- Two of the Monoclonal antibodies being used in India include the REGCov2 (Casirivimab and Imdevimab).
- In these drugs, antibodies for COVID target specific proteins and destroy them before they initiate inflammation.

**What are Monoclonal antibodies?**

- Monoclonal antibodies are identical copies of an antibody that targets one specific antigen.
- Scientists can make monoclonal antibodies by exposing white blood cells to a particular antigen.
- Each monoclonal antibody is specific to its matching antigen.
- Scientists select a single white blood cell or clone and use this as the basis to produce many identical cells, making many identical copies of the monoclonal antibody.

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**Imaging Objects Through Fog:** Researchers have recently found a method that can improve the images captured on such days. The imaging of objects in foggy weather conditions may now be clearer.

**Highlights:**

- The team from the Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bengaluru, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology; Space Applications Centre, Indian Space Research Organisation, Ahmedabad; Shiv Nadar University, Gautam Buddha Nagar; and Université Rennes and Université Paris-Saclay, CNRS, France, modulated the light source and demodulated them at the observer's end to achieve sharper images.
- The research was published in the journal ‘OSA Continuum’.
- Research by a team has offered a solution for improving the image
quality without heavy computations.
- The study was partially funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

Key Points:
- The researchers demonstrated the technique by conducting extensive experiments on foggy winter mornings at Shiv Nadar University, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.
- With this technique, imaging of objects during foggy weather may now be clearer, as this method can improve images captured on foggy days.
- This technique involves modulation of light source and demodulation at observer’s end.

About the Technique:
- Researchers selected ten red LED lights as source of light.
- They modulated this source of light by varying current flowing through LEDs at a rate of about 15 cycles per second.
- A camera was installed at a distance of 150 metres from the LEDs, which captured image and transmitted it to desktop computer.
- Then, computer algorithms used knowledge of modulation frequency to extract characteristics of the source.
- This process is dubbed as ‘demodulation’.

Significance of technique:
- This technique is cost effective as it requires only a few LEDs and an ordinary desktop computer.
- It can improve landing techniques of aeroplanes by providing pilot with a good view of beacons across the runway.
- It is better than relying only on reflected radio waves.
- This method can also reveal obstacles in path which are otherwise hidden by fog in rail, sea, and road transportation.
- It can help in identifying lighthouse beacons.

Background:
- Researchers have long attempted to use physics of scattering and computer algorithms to process resulting data and improve quality of images.
- But computer algorithms require processing of large volumes of data increasing storage and processing time.

Tiangong space Station: China has successfully launched the first three men crew to the country’s Tiangong space station in its first crewed mission in five years on June 17, 2021.
Highlights:

- Shenzhou-12 spaceship was launched by a Long March-2F Y12 rocket which blasted off shortly after the target time of 9.22 am from the Jiuquan launch center in Northwestern China.
- The last human spaceflight by China was launched in 2016.
- Shenzhou-12, meaning 'Divine Vessel', will be the third of the 11 missions required to complete China’s Space Station by 2022.
- The astronauts are being sent for a three-month stay aboard the core module, to see how the men handle their relatively long time in orbit.
- The planned three months stay of the astronauts during the Shenzhou-12 mission will also break China’s record of 30 days which was set by the 2016 mission. It was China’s last crewed flight carrying Jing Haipeng and Chen Dong to a prototype station.
- The mission is the latest stage in China’s ambitious plans to be the only country to own and run its own space station, expected to be completed less than two years from now.

Details:

- The three astronauts - Nie Haisheng, 56, Liu Boming 54, and Tang Hongbo, 45, travelled in Shenzhou-12 spaceship which was launched by a Long March-2F Y12 rocket.
- Shenzhou-12 spacecraft docked with Tianhe, the main section of the Tiangong station, hours after blasting off from the Gobi Desert in northwest China.
- The team expected to be on Tiangong for three months.
- The astronauts will carry out experiments; they will test equipment, conduct maintenance, and will prepare the station for receiving two additional modules in 2022.

About Shenzhou-12:

The Shenzhou-12 is made up of three sections – an orbiter module, a return module, and a propelling module, and has 14 sub-systems onboard.

Chinese Women in Space:

- In 2011, two women, Wang Yaping and Liu Yang were selected among China’s second cohort, after the first batch of 14 men in the mid-1990s.
- Liu Yang became China’s first woman in space in 2012, while Wang Yaping became the youngest to go into space at the age of 33 in 2013.

China’s ambitious space station:

- China aims at becoming a major space faring power by 2030.
- China began building its space station in April 2021 with the launch of Tianhe, the first and the largest of its three modules.
- The country aims at sending a robotic cargo resupply spacecraft and three more astronauts for a six-month stay.
- In May 2021 became the second country to put a rover on Mars, 2 years after landing the first
spacecraft on the far side of the moon.
- The Chinese Space Agency also plans to put astronauts on the moon.

Important Info:
- Chinese astronauts have had a comparatively low international profile.
- US legislation bars NASA from any cooperation with China, and Chinese astronauts have not been to the more than two-decade-old International Space Station (ISS), which has been visited by more than 240 men and women of various nationalities.
- The ISS may be decommissioned in 2024 if the project does not receive new funding, and China could end up being the operator of the only space station in Earth’s orbit.

EnVision Mission: Following NASA’s footsteps, the European Space Agency (ESA), recently announced that it has selected EnVision as its next orbiter that will visit Venus sometime in the 2030s.

About EnVision Mission:
- EnVision is an ESA led mission with contributions from NASA.
- It is likely to be launched sometime in the 2030s.
- The earliest launch opportunity for EnVision is 2031, followed by 2032 and 2033.
- Once launched on an Ariane 6 rocket, the spacecraft will take about 15 months to reach Venus and will take 16 more months to achieve orbit circularisation.
- The spacecraft will carry a range of instruments to study the planet’s atmosphere and surface, monitor trace gases in the atmosphere and analyse its surface composition.
- A radar provided by NASA will help to image and map the surface.
- At the core of the ESA’s mission is the question of how Earth and Venus evolved so differently from each other considering that they are roughly of the same size and composition.

About Venus:
- For those on Earth, Venus is the second-brightest object in the sky after the moon.
- It appears bright because of its thick cloud cover that reflects and scatters light.
- One day on Venus is equivalent to 243 Earth days because of its backward spinning, opposite to that of the Earth’s and most other planets.
- But while Venus, which is the second closest planet to the Sun, is called the Earth’s twin because of their similar sizes, the two planets have significant differences between them.
• For one, the planet’s thick atmosphere traps heat and is the reason that it is the hottest planet in the solar system, despite coming after Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun.
• Surface temperatures on Venus can go up to 471 degrees Celsius, which is hot enough to melt lead, NASA notes.
• Venus also does not have a moon and no rings.
• Further, Venus moves forward on its orbit around the Sun but spins backwards around its axis slowly.
• This means on Venus the Sun rises in the west and sets in the East.

Why are scientists curious about studying Venus?

• At the core of the ESA’s mission is that the question of how Earth and Venus evolved so differently from one another considering that they’re rough of equivalent size and composition.
• Venus is that the hottest planet within the system due to the warmth that’s trapped by its thick cloudiness.

Jivan Vayu: It is India’s first power-free CPAP device named ‘Jivan Vayu’ that has been developed by IIT Ropar.

Note: Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) is a treatment method for patients having breathing problems during sleep called sleep apnea.

About Jivan Vayu:

• The device is a substitute of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine.
• It can function even without electricity.
• It has been designed for a 22mm CPAP closed-circuit tube.
• It can even be customized as per size of the tube.
• It has been manufactured using 3D printing and has been tested mechanically.
• It is adapted to both kinds of oxygen generation units like O2 cylinders and oxygen pipelines in hospitals.
• These provisions are not available in otherwise existing CPAP machines.
• The machine uses mild air pressure to keep the airways open for easy breathing.
• It is also used to treat infants whose lungs have not fully developed.
• The machine blows air into the baby’s nose to help inflate his or her lungs.
• The treatment is all the more necessary during early stages of the Covid-19 infection.
• It reduces lung damage and allows patients to recover from the inflammatory effects.
Wooden Satellite: The European Space Agency (ESA) has planned to launch the world's first wooden satellite.

Highlights:

It is going to be launched from a Rocket Lab Electron rocket in New Zealand.

It will be launched by the end of 2021.

The satellite is the brainchild of Jari Makinen.

About the Satellite:

- The satellite, WISA Woodsat, is a nanosatellite.
- It is 10cm on each side, length, height, and width.
- The sensors of the satellite have been developed by the ESA.
- The designers have placed the wood in a thermal vacuum chamber to keep it dry.
- A very thin aluminium oxide layer has been used to minimize the vapour coming from the wood and to protect it from the erosive effects of atomic oxygen.
- The non-wooden external parts are made up of aluminium rails.

About ESA:

- The European Space Agency (ESA) is an intergovernmental organization of 22 member states dedicated to the exploration of space.
- ESA is founded on 30 May 1975 from the merger of the European Launcher Development Organisation (ELDO) and the European Space Research Organisation (ESRO), both established in 1964.
- It is headquartered in Paris, France.
- Its mission is to shape the development of Europe's space capability and ensure that investment in space continues to deliver benefits to the citizens of Europe and the world.
- The current CEO of ESA is Johann-Dietrich Worner.

Rare Earth Minerals: The U.S. Senate passed a law aimed at improving American competitiveness that includes provisions to improve critical minerals supply chain.

Key Points:

- America and other countries are taking measures to reduce import dependency on China for rare earth minerals (REM).
US also aims to boost production and processing of rare earths and lithium, another key mineral component while “working with allies to increase sustainable global supply and reduce reliance on competitors”

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, in 2019, the U.S. imported 80% of its rare earth minerals from China.

**What are rare earth minerals?**

- The rare earths minerals (REM) are a set of seventeen metallic elements. These include the fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table in addition to Scandium (Atomic Number 21) and Yttrium (Atomic Number 39) that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides.
- Lanthanide series comprises the 15 metallic chemical elements with atomic numbers 57 through 71, from lanthanum through lutetium.
- Scandium and yttrium are considered rare-earth elements because they tend to occur in the same ore deposits as the lanthanides and exhibit similar chemical properties, but have different electronic and magnetic properties.
- Cerium (AN 58) is the most abundant rare earth metal.

**Properties of REM:**

- The REMs have unique catalytic, metallurgical, nuclear, electrical, magnetic and luminescent properties.
- Their colour ranges from Shiny Silver to Iron Gray.
- They are soft, malleable, ductile and usually reactive, especially at elevated temperatures or when finely divided.

**Strategic importance of REM:**

- Its application ranges from daily use like lighter flints, glass polishing mediums, car alternators, smartphones, laptops, petroleum, to high-end technology such as lasers, magnets, batteries, fibre-optic telecommunication cables, to military including nuclear applications.
- Rare earth minerals, with names like neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium, are crucial to the manufacture of magnets used in industries of the future, such as wind turbines, drones and electric cars.
- Even futuristic technologies need these REMs, for example high-temperature superconductivity, safe storage and transport of hydrogen for a post-hydrocarbon economy, environmental global warming and energy efficiency issues.
- Due to their unique magnetic, luminescent, and electrochemical properties, they help in technologies perform with reduced weight, reduced emissions, and energy consumption, therefore give them greater efficiency, performance, miniaturization, speed, durability, and thermal stability.
China has the largest reserve (37 percent), followed by Brazil and Vietnam (18 percent each), Russia (15 percent), and the remaining countries (12 percent).

Deng Xiaoping said once, The Middle East has oil and China has rare earth.

REM in India:

India has the world’s fifth-largest reserves of rare earth elements, nearly twice as much as Australia, but it imports most of its rare earth needs in finished form from its geopolitical rival, China.

Sports

SPORTS:

French Open 2021: Novak Djokovic recently created history after beating Stefanos Tsitsipas in 5-set.

He won his 19th Grand Slam title in French open 2021 in Men’s single category at Roland Garros in Paris.

Highlights:

- He has become the first man in the Open Era to win all 4 Grand Slam titles at least twice and the third man to win all Grand Slams after Roy Emerson and Rod Laver.
- He won this title after coming back from 2 sets down against 5th seed Stefanos Tsitsipas.
- Djokovic won the title winning Grand Slam final debutant by 6-7 (6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.
- He played 18 sets since his fourth-round match.

Singles-Doubles Title:

- Czech Barbora Krejcikova completed a singles-doubles title sweep at the tournament when she lifted the women’s doubles trophy with compatriot Katerina Siniakova.
- The pair beat Iga Swiatek and Bethanie Mattek-Sands 6-4, 6-2.
- Krejcikova became the first player to win both the women’s singles and doubles title in Paris since French woman Mary Pierce completed the feat in 2000.

Women’s Single Title:

- On 12 June 2021, in the Women’s singles final, unseeded Krejcikova beat Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova to win her maiden grand slam.

2021 French Open:

- The 2021 French Open was a Grand Slam tennis tournament played on outdoor clay courts.
- It was held at the Stade Roland Garros in Paris, France, from 30 May to 13 June 2021, comprising singles, doubles and mixed doubles play.
- The qualifiers took place from 24 May to 28 May.
About Novak Djokovic:

- Born on 22 May 1987, Novak is a Serbian professional tennis player.
- He is currently ranked as world No. 1 by Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP).
- He has been No. 1 for record total of 325 weeks.
- He has won 19 Grand Slam men’s singles titles and 84 ATP singles titles.
- It also includes a record nine Australian Open titles and a record 36 Masters Events which he shares with Rafael Nadal.
- He is the only player who have won all Big Titles on all four Grand Slam tournaments, all nine ATP Masters events and ATP Finals.

About French Open:

- French Open is a major tennis tournament organized for two weeks at Stade Roland-Garros in Paris, France.
- The French Open is known as Internationaux de France de Tennis in French and Roland Garros in Europe.
- It starts in late May each year.
- Tournament and venue have been after French aviator Roland Garros.
- It is a clay court tennis championship tournament.
- It is the second of the four annual Grand Slam tournaments.
- The other three are the Australian Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open.

Vinesh Phogat: Tokyo Olympic Games bound wrestler Vinesh Phogat won the women’s 53kg freestyle gold with an 8-0 win over Khrystyna Bereza of Ukraine at the Poland Ranking Series in Warsaw.

Highlights:

- With less than 50 days to go for the Olympic Games to begin, Vinesh looked strong in defence and swift in attacks and counter-attacks.
- This was Phogat’s third gold medal in as many tournaments in last two months.
- She won the yellow metal in Sassari and Yasar Dogu ranking tournaments in Italy and Turkey respectively.
- Since changing her weight category from 50 kg to 53 kg, she has won a silver, a bronze, and three gold medals.
- She will also represent India at the World Championships in Nursultan, Kazakhstan in September.
The Championships offer six Tokyo Olympic quotas in each weight category.

CAIMS: It refers to the Central Athlete Injury Management System. CAIMS initiative was recently launched by the Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister of the Ministry of Ayush Kiren Rijiju.

Key Highlights:

- It is a first-of-its-kind initiative by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- It is for streamlining the sports medicine and rehabilitation support offered to the athletes for Olympics 2024 and beyond.
- It will start with support for athletes who are a part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) development group expected to participate in 2024 and beyond.

Aim:

- CAIMS aims to provide the best of sports injury management support nearest to the athlete's geographical location.
- CAIMS will help to standardize appropriate injury treatment protocol for athletes across the country.

Structure of CAIMS:

CAIMS will have the following four structures:

1. Athlete Wellness Cell
2. On-Field Sports Medicine Experts
3. National Resource Referral Teams
4. A Central Core Team

The core committee of CAIMS includes eminent top of the line experts such as Dr. SKS Marya, Dr. Dinshaw Pardiwala, Dr. BV Srinivas and Shrikant Iyengar.

Gelfand Challenge Chess Title: D. Gukesh recently won the $15,000 Gelfand Challenge chess title and with it, a ‘wild card’ for the elite Meltwaters Champions Chess Tour.

He won all four rounds, including the key battle against Praggnanandhaa, and emerged on top after a series of favourable results from the games involving other title-contenders.
 ICC Hall of Fame: The ICC recently a list of 10 cricketers who were included in their special edition of Hall of Fame players to celebrate the history of Test cricket.

- The announcement has been coincided with the inaugural World Test Championship final, to be played between India and New Zealand from June 18 in Southampton.

Highlights:

- The ICC has inducted 10 icons of the game into its illustrious Hall of Fame with two players each from five eras, dating back to cricket’s early days, making it to the list.
- Former India cricketer Vinoo Mankad was among the 10 players included in the special edition list of the International Cricket Council’s (ICC) Hall of Fame.
- The 10 legends of the game to be inducted have all made a significant contribution to the history of Test cricket, and join an illustrious list of ICC Hall of Famers, taking the total number to 103 as a result of this intake.

The inductees are:

The players included in the list represented five different eras of Test cricket:

1. Early Cricket Era (pre-1918): Aubrey Faulkner (SA) and Monty Noble (AUS)
2. Inter-War Era (1918-1945): Sir Learie Constantine (WI) and Stan McCabe (AUS)
3. Post-War Era (1946-1970): Ted Dexter (ENG) and Vinoo Mankad (IND)
4. ODI Era (1971-1995): Desmond Hayes (WI) and Bob Willis (ENG)

About Vinoo Mankad:

- Vinoo Mankad of India was known as one of India’s greatest-ever all-rounders.
- He played 44 Tests, scored 2,109 runs at 31.47, took 162 wickets at 32.32, and was an opening batsman and slow left arm orthodox bowler.
- His most famous feat was against England at Lord’s in 1952 when he scored 72 and 184 and bowled 97 overs in the match.
- He is one of only three cricketers to have batted in every position during his Test career.
In later life, he also coached another legendary cricketer and fellow ICC Hall of Fame member from his country, Sunil Gavaskar in Mumbai, India.

ICC Player of the Month: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced Scotland’s Kathryn Bryce and Bangladesh’s Mushfiqur Rahim as the winners of the ICC Player of the Month Awards for May.

ICC Player of the Month Awards aims to recognize and celebrate the best performances from both male and female cricketers across all forms of international cricket throughout the year.

About the Mushfiqur Rahim:

- From the Bangladesh camp, Mushfiqur Rahim was named the ICC Men’s Player of the Month for May 2021.
- He played one Test and three ODIs against Sri Lanka in the month of May where he helped Bangladesh win their first ODI series against Sri Lanka by scoring 125 in the second ODI.

About the Kathryn Bryce:

- All-rounder Kathryn Bryce from Scotland was deservedly voted the ICC Women’s Player of the Month for May 2021 as she is the first player from Scotland, male, or female, to make it to the top 10 of the batting or bowling lists in the ICC Player Rankings released recently.
- Kathryn played four T20Is against Ireland where she scored 96 runs and took 5 wickets with an economy rate of 4.76 in the month of May.