



Civil Service India
Your IAS Guide

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- **Art and Culture**
- **Defence**
- **Economy**
- **Environment**
- **National News**
- **International News**
- **India Polity**
- **India Policy**
- **People and Places**
- **Science and Technology**
- **Sports News**

2021
MARCH

WEEK- 8 March to
14 March

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Declaration of World Heritage Sites:



The Union Minister of Culture and Tourism recently informed Lok Sabha about the Declaration of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

Main Points:

- Currently, India has 38 World Heritage Properties.
- All the sites under the Ministry are conserved as per ASI's Conservation Policy.
- As of now, India has forty two sites listed under Tentative List which is a pre-requisite condition for inscription as World Heritage Site.
- 'Dholavira: A Harappan City' has been submitted for nomination of World Heritage Site in 2019-2020.
- Nomination dossiers of 'Santiniketan, India' and 'Sacred Ensemble of Hoysalas' have been submitted to UNESCO for the year 2021-22 cycle.

Additional Info:

- Augmentation of sites on the World Heritage List and Tentative List is a continuous process.
- Sites are selected on the basis of their potential for fulfilling criteria under Operational Guidelines and

demonstration of Outstanding Universal Value.

Singorgarh Fort:



The President of India Ram Nath Kovind recently laid the foundation stone for the conservation works of Singorgarh Fort in Madhya Pradesh.

Highlights:

- ❖ The President also inaugurated the newly carved Jabalpur Circle of Archaeological Survey of India.
- ❖ Apart from this, President Kovind addressed the State Level Tribal Conference 'Janjatiya Sammelan' at Singrampur village in Damoh.
- ❖ The program was organized jointly by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and the Tribal Affairs Department of Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ On this occasion, Kovind also paid his floral tributes at the statue of Rani Durgavati in Singrampur village. He launched the booklet of Tribal Department and a portal for virtual classes for the tribal artists too.
- ❖ The President also awarded the talented tribal students with the Shankar Shah and Rani Durgavati awards.

About Singorgarh Fort:

- ❖ Singorgarh Fort is located in Singrampur village of Damoh district in Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ It is a hill-fort of Gondwana Kingdom, spread over the hills of a forested area.
- ❖ Before coming in hand of Gond rulers, Singorgarh fort was under Chandel rulers in 1308.
- ❖ It was Gond ruler Sangram Shah who conquered the Singorgarh fort in early period of 16th century.
- ❖ The fort also comprises of a pond at the hilltop that provided water.
- ❖ It is presently in a ruined condition with no caretaker for which conservation work is launched.

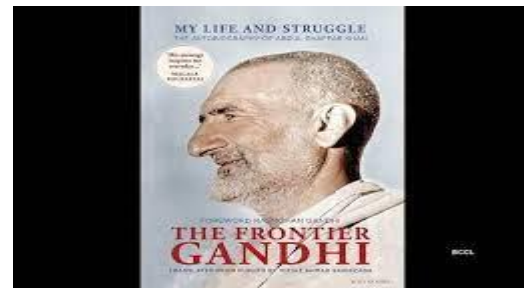
Gondwana Dynasty:

- ❖ The Gondwana dynasty is famous in history for the unprecedented bravery of the Successor of King Yadavrai and daughter-in-law of Maharaja Sangram Shah, Maharani Durgavati (1548 AD).
- ❖ Rani Durgavati was a great Hindu warrior queen.
- ❖ Her achievements further enhanced the glory of her ancestral tradition of courage and patronage of arts in 1542, she was married to Dalpat Shah, the eldest son of king Sangram Shah of Gond Dynasty.
- ❖ The brave Queen fought the Mughals.
- ❖ Durgavati took the reins of the Gond kingdom in her hands. Two ministers Adhar Kayastha and Man Thakur helped the Rani in looking after the administration successfully and effectively.
- ❖ Rani moved her capital to Chauragarh in place of Singaugarh.

- ❖ It was a fort of strategic importance situated on the Satpura hill range.
- ❖ King Sumedshah was the last ruler of this dynasty.
- ❖ The stories of bravery and generosity of King Prem Shah and Hirdeshah are still told by the folks, specially the rain of Gold.
- ❖ King Shankarshah and Raghunathshah were punished from death penalty for insurgency against the British Government in 1857.
- ❖ And this is how this Gond dynasty ruled gloriously for about 1400 Years.
- ❖ Many political and natural changes took place during this period.
- ❖ There is historical as well as religious importance with these 52 Garhs of Maharaja Sangram Shah.

Books and Authors:

Frontier Gandhi's autobiography:



The autobiography of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as the “Frontier Gandhi”, titled “The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle” is set to be published in English by the publishing house Roli Books.

Highlights:

- ❖ This will be his first autobiography in English.
- ❖ The book was translated into English by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada,

the former Pakistani civil servant and author.

- ❖ The earlier account of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's life in English was not his autobiography but was a collection of his interviews.
- ❖ The foreword of the book is written by historian Rajmohan Gandhi, Grandson of Gandhi and the book was originally written in Pashto and published in 1983.

Main points about the book:

- ❖ The book by Ghaffar Khan brings out the life events and personalities of the independence movement.
- ❖ The book accounts the sacrifices and efforts that resulted in the Independence of India.

About Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan:

- ❖ Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan who was also known as Bacha Khan or Badshah Khan.
- ❖ He was honourably addressed as Fakhr-e-Afghan (Pride of Afghans).
- ❖ He was born in Utmanzai, North-west Frontier Province, British India in 1890.
- ❖ He was a Pashtun independence activist against British colonial rule in India.
- ❖ He was a political and spiritual leader known for his nonviolent opposition and lifelong pacifism.
- ❖ He was a devout Muslim and an advocate for Hindu-Muslim unity in the Indian subcontinent.
- ❖ He was one of the close associates of Mahatma Gandhi.
- ❖ He led the Khundai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement from 1930 to 1947.

Mahashivratri:



Yet another legend goes on to say that Shivaratri is celebrated as the day when Brahma and Vishu got into a major tiff about their supremacy over each other and an angry Lord Shiva punished them by taking the form of a mass fire that spread across the length of the universe.

Mahashivratri is an important festival in India, celebrated with devotion and enthusiasm, in honour of Lord Shiva.

- ❖ This festival is solemn and marks a remembrance of "overcoming darkness and ignorance" in life and the world.
- ❖ Maha Shivratri literally translates to 'The Great Night of Shiva' is the festival to honour the Hindu God of Shiva in the form of fasting and chanting prayers.
- ❖ The actual origin of this festival is unknown but this day is celebrated on the 13th night and 14th day of the month Phalguna. In the Gregorian calendar, the day falls in February or March.
- ❖ The festival of Maha Shivaratri, this year was observed today on March 11, 2021.

Celebration of Mahashivratri in different regions of India:

- ❖ In Kashmir Shaivism, the festival is called Har-ratri or phonetically simpler Haerath or Herath by Shiva devotees of the Kashmir region.
- ❖ Central India has a large number of Shaiva followers. The Mahakaleshwar Temple, Ujjain is one of the most venerated shrines consecrated to Shiva, where a large congregation of devotees gathers to of-

fer prayers on the day of Maha Shivaratri.

- ❖ Tilwara Ghat in the city of Jabalpur and the Math Temple in the village of Jeonara, Seoni are two other places where the festival is celebrated with much religious fervour.
- ❖ In Punjab, Shobha Yatras would be organized by various Hindu organisations in different cities.
- ❖ In Gujarat, Maha Shivaratri mela is held at Bhavnath near Junagadh where bathing in the Mrugi (Mrigi) kund is considered holy. According to myth, Lord Shiva himself comes to bath in the Mrugi kund.
- ❖ In West Bengal, Maha Shivaratri is observed devoutly by unmarried girls seeking a suitable husband, often visiting Tarakeswar.
- ❖ In Odisha, Maha Shivaratri is also known as Jagara. People fast for their wishes whole day and take food after 'Mahadipa' (The great diya) rises at the top of Shiva temple. It usually is held during midnight. Unmarried girls also worship for seeking a suitable husband.

Mahashivratri in Nepal:

- ❖ Maha Shivaratri is a national Holiday in Nepal and celebrated widely in temples all over the country, especially in the Pashupatinath temple.
- ❖ Maha Shivaratri is celebrated as Nepali Army Day amid a spectacu-

lar ceremony held at the Army Pavilion, Tundikhel.

- ❖ Artists from various classical music and dance forms perform through the night.
- ❖ On Maha Shivaratri, married women pray for the well being of their husbands, while unmarried women pray for a husband like Shiva, considered as the ideal husband.
- ❖ Shiva is also worshipped as the Adi Guru (first teacher) from whom the divine wisdom originates.

Why do we celebrate Mahashivratri?

The Maha Shivaratri is mentioned in several Puranas, particularly the Skanda Purana, Linga Purana and Padma Purana.

There are several stories and beliefs on why we celebrate Mahashivratri. As per Hindu mythology:

- ❖ It is believed that after the death of Sati, Lord Shiva went into deep meditation. Sati reincarnated as Parvati. Therefore, Mahashivratri marks the union of Shiva and Parvati on the 14th day of the dark fortnight in the month of Phalgun.
- ❖ It is also believed that Shiva performed the dance of preservation, creation and destruction on this night.
- ❖ There is a story about Samudra Manthan when Lord Shiva saved the world. It is believed that on this day he drank and held the poison (halaalal) in his throat instead of

swallowing it which turned his throat blue. From there, the name 'Neelkantha' originated.

Defence

Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile (ACTCM):



The Indian Navy recently signed a contract with Suryadipta Projects to construct 11 ammunition-cum-torpedo-cum-missile (ACTCM) barges.

Background:

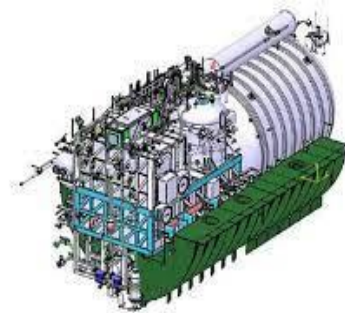
- The contract for construction & delivery of Eleven Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile (ACTCM) Barges was concluded with M/s Suryadipta Projects Private Limited, Thane, an MSME on 05 March 2021.

Key Points:

- The ACTCM Barges will be inducted in Indian Navy to undertake the mission needs for embarking or disembarking Ammunition, Torpedo & Missile etc.
- These barges will be built under the Classification Rules of Indian Register of Shipping (IRS).
- Delivery of these Barges is scheduled to commence from May 22.
- The project adds another milestone to the Atmanirbhar Bharat & Make

in India initiative of the Government of India (GoI).

DRDO Develops AIP Technology:



Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has achieved an important milestone in the development of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) System by proving the land-based prototype on 8 March 2021.

The Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO, Indian Navy and Industry for the achievement.

Highlights:

- The system is being developed by Naval Materials Research Laboratory (NMRL) of DRDO.
- AIP has a force multiplier effect on lethality of a diesel electric submarine as it enhances the submerged endurance of the boat, several folds.
- Fuel cell-based AIP has merits in performance compared to other technologies.
- While there are different types of AIP systems being pursued internationally, fuel cell-based AIP of NMRL is unique as the hydrogen is generated onboard.
- The technology has been successfully developed with the support of

industry partners L&T and Thermax.

- It has now reached the stage of maturity for fitment into target vessels.
- AIP allows a submarine to be submerged for longer periods under water and makes the sub-surface platform more deadly by making it quieter than a nuclear submarine.

DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation):

- DRDO is India's largest research organisation. It was founded in 1958.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi, India.
- It is an agency under the Ministry of Defence, Government of India (GoI).
- It is charged with the military's research and development. It has a network of laboratories engaged in developing defence technologies covering various fields, like aeronautics, armaments, electronics, land combat engineering, life sciences, materials, missiles, and naval systems.
- The Minister currently responsible for DRDO is Minister of Defence Shree Rajnath Singh.
- The present Chairman of DRDO is Dr. G. Satheesh Reddy.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur:



Union Minister Anurag Thakur recently became the first serving MP to be appointed as Captain in the Territorial Army.

Thakur has been promoted to the rank of Captain at 124 Infantry Battalion Territorial Army (Sikh).

The four-time BJP MP from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur was commissioned into the Territorial Army as a Lieutenant by then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Dalbir S Suhag TA in July 2016.

DUSTLIK II:



The India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK II has commenced in Foreign Training Node Chaubatia, Ranikhet in Uttarakhand.

Highlights:

- This is the Second Edition of the annual bilateral joint exercise of both armies.
- It will continue till the 19th March 2021.
- The first edition of the exercise was held in Uzbekistan in November 2019.

- 45 Soldiers each from Uzbekistan and the Indian Army are participating in the exercise.
- Both contingents will be sharing their expertise and skills in the field of counter-terrorist operations in mountainous or rural or urban scenarios under UN mandate.
- The validation exercise will be a testbed for the soldiers of both armies as they would be undergoing the challenges of actual operations in such scenarios.

Benefits:

- The joint exercise will definitely provide impetus to the ever-growing military and diplomatic ties between the two nations and also reflects the strong resolve of both nations to counter-terrorism.

CISF Raising Day:



The Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF) Raising Day (CRD) is observed on March 10 in India every year.

The Nation this year celebrated the 52nd Raising Day of CISF.

About CISF:

- The Central Industrial security force (CISF), an armed force of the Union established in its present form on 15 June 1983 is a Central Armed Police Force in India.

- It was set up under an Act of the Parliament of India on 10 March 1969 with a strength of 2,800.
- CISF was subsequently made an armed force of India by another Act of Parliament passed on 15 June 1983.
- CISF is mandated to provide security to the premises staff along with the security of property and establishments.
- CISF is one of six paramilitary forces in India and functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It is the only force with a customized and dedicated fire wing.
- The CISF has 12 reserve battalions and 8 training institutes.
- The current Director-General of CISF is Subodh Kumar Jaiswal.

Objective of CISF:

- The basic objective of the CISF is Better “protection and security” of industrial undertakings in both government and private sectors in the country.

Economics

Agroforestry in the silk sector:



The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare recently signed a MoU with the Central Silk Board (CSB) on a convergence

model for the implementation of Agroforestry in the silk sector under the ongoing Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF) Scheme.

Highlights:

- ❖ The MoU was signed in the presence of Union Minister of textile and Women & Child Development, Smriti Irani and the Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Parshottam Rupala.
- ❖ This initiative in sericulture sector is especially targeted for augmentation of sericulture host plants e.g. Mulberry, Asan, Arjuna, Bada Kesseru, Phanat, Som, Soalu, Kesseru, etc. to be cultivated both as block plantations and border or peripheral plantations on farmlands.

About CSB:

- ❖ The Central Silk Board (CSB) is a Statutory Body, established during 1948.
- ❖ It functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles.
- ❖ It is headquartered in Bengaluru.

About Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF):

- ❖ The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC & FW) has been implementing the Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF) since 2016-17 as part of the recommendation of the National Agroforestry Policy 2014.
- ❖ India was the first country to have such a comprehensive policy which was launched at the World Agro-

forestry Congress held in Delhi in February 2014.

- ❖ At present, the scheme is being implemented in 20 States and 2 UTs.

Aim:

SMAF aims to encourage farmers to plant multi-purpose trees together with the agriculture crops for climate resilience and an additional source of income to the farmers, as well as enhanced feedstock to inter alia wood-based and herbal industry.

CSIR Floriculture Mission:



Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan recently launched 'CSIR Floriculture Mission' through virtual mode in New Delhi.

Key Points:

- ❖ The CSIR Floriculture Mission has been approved for implementation in 21 States and Union Territories (UTs) of India.
- ❖ Under the mission, the available knowledgebase in CSIR Institutes will be utilized and leveraged to help Indian farmers and industry re-position themselves to meet the import requirements.
- ❖ The CSIR Floriculture Mission will be implemented in collaboration with several bodies. These bodies are as follows:

1. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (IC-AR)
2. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)
3. Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED)
4. Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)
5. Fragrance and Flavour Development Centre (FFDC)
6. Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

tial to give 5 times more return than the traditional crops.

- ❖ It also has the potential to provide huge employment through floriculture farming, nursery raising, entrepreneurship development for nursery trade and export.
- ❖ This mission is significant because it is expected to create opportunities for entrepreneurship development in floriculture.
- ❖ Under the mission, CSIR will lead to infuse the latest technologies in the field of floriculture.

What is floriculture?

Floriculture, or flower farming, is a discipline of horticulture concerned with the cultivation of flowering and ornamental plants for gardens and for floristry, comprising the floral industry.

Aim of CSIR Floriculture Mission:

- ❖ The CSIR Floriculture Mission aims to focus on commercial floral crops, seasonal and annual crops, and cultivation of flower crops for honey bee rearing and wild ornaments.
- ❖ Some of the popular floriculture crops include Marigold, Rose, Gladiolus, Gerbera, Canna, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Lilium and Tuberose.

Significance of the mission:

- ❖ Despite the fact that India has diverse agro-climatic and edaphic conditions, and rich plant diversity, it shares only 0.6 % of global floriculture market.
- ❖ This is because the Indian Farmers have little knowledge regarding the floriculture which have the poten-

Additional Info:

- ❖ Harsh Vardhan also launched CSIR's Societal Portal along with the Android App.
- ❖ This portal has been developed by CSIR Team with the help of MyGov Team.
- ❖ The Portal is to facilitate the public to submit the societal problems that can be resolved using S&T interventions.

SmartUp Unnati programme:



HDFC Bank recently announced the launch of a dedicated programme named “SmartUp Unnati” for mentoring women entrepreneurs by women leaders at the bank.

Highlights:

- ❖ The announcement was made on the occasion of International Women’ Day (IWD).
- ❖ Under the SmartUp Unnati programme, over the next one year, senior women leaders from HDFC Bank will mentor women entrepreneurs in helping them achieve their goals.
- ❖ This programme is available only to existing customers and will initially target more than 3,000 women entrepreneurs associated with the bank’s SmartUp programme.

About HDFC Bank Limited:

- ❖ HDFC Bank Limited is an Indian banking and financial services company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ❖ A subsidiary of the Housing Development Finance Corporation, HDFC Bank was founded in August 1994.
- ❖ It is India's largest private sector bank.

- ❖ The current MD and CEO of HDFC Bank is Sashidhar Jagdishan who Succeeds Aditya Puri.
- ❖ The tagline of HDFC Bank: We understand your world.

Naureen Hassan:



Indian-origin Naureen Hassan has recently been appointed as the first Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the New York-based Federal Reserve Bank.

She was appointed by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (FRS).

She is a 25-year veteran of the financial services industry with expertise in strategy, digital transformation, cybersecurity and regulatory/risk management.

Hassan has now become the second-highest-ranking officer of the New York Fed as well as an alternate voting member of the Federal Open Market Committee.

Prior to this, she was the Chief Digital Officer for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management (MSWM).

She took over the new role with effect from March 15, 2021.

Federal Reserve Bank (FRS):

- ❖ The Federal Reserve System (FRS) is the central bank of the United States.
- ❖ It was created on December 23, 1913, with the enactment of the

Federal Reserve Act, after a series of financial panics led to the desire for central control of the monetary system in order to alleviate financial crises.

- ❖ It is headquartered in New York, United States.
- ❖ The current CEO of FRS is John C. Williams and the Chairman is Jerome Powell.
- ❖ The FRS provides the country with a safe, flexible, and stable monetary and financial system.
- ❖ Known simply as the Fed, it is composed of 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks that are each responsible for a specific geographic area of the U.S

Environment

Sangay Volcano:



An active volcano “Sangay” located in central Ecuador erupted on 11th March 2021 posing threat to the health of the citizens of the South American nation amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

- It ejected the clouds of ash up to the height of 8500 meters into the sky.
- Following the eruption, the sky in the capital of Chimborazo called Riobamba was overcast with the ash cloud even though the capital

city is located around 50 kilometres away from the Sangay Volcano.

- The Sangay volcano has recorded activity since past few weeks now. the ash from the volcano has also damaged the crops and cattle around the city.

About Sangay Volcano:

- Sangay volcano is also known as Macas, Sanagay, or Sangai.
- It is one among the highest active volcanoes in the world.
- The volcano is the southernmost stratovolcano located in the northern volcanic zone of the Andes.
- It is around 5230 metre in height.
- It is home to the significant biological community with fauna like giant otter, mountain tapir, Andean cock-of-the-rock and king vulture.
- Since 1983, its ecological community has been protected as part of the Sangay National Park.
- The park is a world heritage site.
- Sangay volcano erupted historically in 17th century (in 1628). After that, continuous eruptions were reported in 18th, 20th and 21st century (between 1728 & 1916 to 1934 & present). It has had frequent eruptions mostly of strombolian type.

What is Stratovolcano?

- Stratovolcanos are volcanos comprising of the alternate layers of lava and ash.

What do you mean by Strombolian eruption?

- The type of volcanic eruption comprising of mild blasts are known as the Strombolian eruption.

- Such eruptions are having Volcanic Explosivity Index of 1 to 3.
- It comprises of ejection of the incandescent cinders, lava bombs and lapilli.
- It rises up to the altitudes of 10 to hundreds of metres.

Metabolism of Sharks:



The scientists in a recent study concluded that, the warming of worldwide oceans because of climate change may affect the metabolism of sharks.

Highlights:

- The scientists conducted the work in connection with the New England Aquarium, studied epaulette sharks, which live off Australia and New Guinea.
- They found that warmer conditions sped up the sharks' growing process, and that meant they hatched from eggs earlier and were born exhausted.
- The scientists also found that the baby sharks were at the risk of being born smaller. They would also be born without energy they require to survive.

How the study was conducted?

- The scientists performed the work by using the aquarium's breeding program for the sharks.

- They, first raised 27 sharks under the average summer conditions or in about 27°C. They were also kept under the temperature of about the 29°C and 31°C.
- They found that that the sharks reared in warmest temperatures weighed less than those who were raised in the average temperatures. They also exhibited the reduced metabolic performance.

About Epaulette sharks:

- Epaulette sharks are small bottom-dwelling sharks that can grow to be about 3 feet (1 meter) long.
- It is a species of long tailed carpet shark which belongs to the family Hemiscylliidae.
- Harmless to humans, they're named for large spots above their pectoral fins that resemble military shoulder ornaments
- It is found in the shallow and tropical waters off Australia and New Guinea.
- The shark comprises of a very large, white-margined black spot behind each of the pectoral fin.
- The shark is less than 1 m in length.
- The shark has a slender body with the short head and broad, paddle-shaped paired fins.
- The sharks have nocturnal habits.
- The sharks are listed as stable and a species of "least concern" on the In-

International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

National

Agriculture Voltage Technology:



Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shri Narendra Singh Tomar recently informed the Lok Sabha about the Agriculture Voltage Technology.

Main Points:

- ❖ Agri-voltaic system of 105 KW capacity has been developed by ICAR-Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur.
- ❖ This technology can increase the income of farmers by generation of electricity and growing of cash crops simultaneously on the same piece of land.
- ❖ There is a provision for installation of agri-voltaic system in farmers' fields with a capacity ranging from 500 KW to 2 MW under the component-I of KUSUM (Kisan Urja Suraksha Utthan Mahabhiyan) scheme.
- ❖ The National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) has also doc-

umented 13 operational agri-voltaic systems in India.

About NSEFI:

- ❖ National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) is an umbrella organization of all solar energy stakeholders of India.
- ❖ NSEFI was founded in 2013 and is headquartered in New Delhi, India.
- ❖ This apex solar organization works in the area of policy advocacy and it aims to provide a platform at the National level for addressing all issues connected with solar energy growth in India.
- ❖ It consists of leading National, International and regional companies and includes Solar Developers, Manufacturers, EPC Contractors, Rooftop Installers, System integrators, and Balance of Plant suppliers and manufacturers, Small and Medium Enterprises and works in a complimentary manner with the Central and State Governments for achieving India's national solar target of 100 GW by 2022.

PMSSN:



It is an acronym for Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi.

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the PMSSN as a single non-lapsable reserve fund.

This has been approved for the share of Health from proceeds of Health and Education Cess which is levied under the Section 136-b of Finance Act, 2007.

Key highlights about PMSSN:

- This is a non-lapsable reserve fund for the Health in the Public Account.
- Proceeds of share of health in the Health and Education Cess will be credited into PMSSN.
- This revenue in the fund will be used for the flagship schemes of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. These are:
 1. National Health Mission
 2. Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs)
 3. Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)
 4. Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)
 5. Emergency & disaster preparedness and responses in cases of health emergencies.
 6. Any future programme/scheme that targets to achieve progress towards SDGs and the targets set out in the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017.

- Administration and maintenance of the PMSSN is entrusted to Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- In any financial year, the expenditure on such schemes of the MoHFW would be initially incurred from the PMSSN and thereafter, from Gross Budgetary Support (GBS).
- The major benefit of the fund is to insure enhanced access to universal & affordable health care through availability of earmarked resources, while ensuring that the amount does not lapse at the end of financial year.

2021 Dandi March:



Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently flagged off the foot march to re-enact the historic Mahatma Gandhi-led Salt March, while launching the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav'.

Highlights:

- ❖ Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav is the initiative of the Government of India (GoI) to mark 75 years of India's Independence which will go on for 75 weeks until August 15, 2022, India's 75th Independence Day.

- ❖ The symbolic "Dandi March" was flagged off from Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad.
- ❖ The march from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Navsari district, a distance of 386 km, will take 25 days.
- ❖ It will mark the 91st anniversary of the historic march against the tax on salt imposed by the British in India.
- ❖ The Salt March, which took place from March to April 1930, was an act of civil disobedience led by Mahatma Gandhi to protest the British rule in the country.
- ❖ At the flagging off ceremony, PM Modi reiterated the five themes of the celebrations as the guiding force for moving forward, keeping dreams and duties as the inspiration.
- ❖ The themes are as follows:
 1. Freedom Struggle,
 2. Ideas at 75,
 3. Achievements at 75,
 4. Actions at 75
 5. Resolves at 75
- ❖ was later joined by thousands of others on his way.
- ❖ The 24-day march started on March 12 from Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat's Ahmedabad to the village of Dandi in the state's coastal area.
- ❖ The movement played a significant role in the Civil Disobedience Movement against the salt laws.
- ❖ The march was conducted by Mahatma Gandhi to oppose the salt law introduced by British rule.
- ❖ Under this salt law, Indians were restricted from producing or selling salt.
- ❖ British not only exercised monopoly over the manufacture of salt, but also imposed a heavy salt tax.
- ❖ However, Gandhi Ji broke the law by producing the salt at Dandi sea-shore followed by several other Indians.
- ❖ After making salt at Dandi, Gandhi headed to Dharasana Salt Works, 40 km south, but was arrested on May 5.

About Dandi March 1930:

- ❖ The Dandi March or Dandi Satyagrah was a non-violent protest against the British monopoly on salt production that was initiated by Mahatma Gandhi on March 12, 1930.
- ❖ The historical march was led by Babuji along with 78 people and
- ❖ The salt satyagraha led to the boycott of British clothes and goods.
- ❖ The march played the most significant role in challenging the Britishers since the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920–22.

- ❖ It directly followed the Purna Swaraj declaration by the Indian National Congress on January 26, 1930.

Maitri Setu:



The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the 'Maitri Setu' bridge between India and Bangladesh through a video conference.

Main Points:

- ❖ The bridge aims to strengthen the connectivity between both countries and especially with the north-eastern region of India.
- ❖ The name 'Maitri Setu' symbolises growing bilateral relations and friendly ties between India and Bangladesh.

About Maitri Setu:

- ❖ Maitri Setu has been built over Feni river which flows between Indian boundary in Tripura State and Bangladesh.
- ❖ The 1.9 Km long bridge connects Sabroom (in Tripura) with Ramgarh (in Bangladesh).
- ❖ The bridge will also make Tripura the 'Gateway of North East' with access to Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, which is just 80 km from the Sabroom.

- ❖ The bridge has been constructed by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited at a project cost of around Rs. 133 Crore.

Additional Info:

- ❖ PM Modi also laid the foundation stone for setting up an Integrated Check Post at Sabroom.

International

China's new Five-Year Plan:



China on 11th March 2021 formally approved the outline of its 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

The draft outline of the Five-Year Plan (FYP) and objectives through the year 2035 were passed by the National People's Congress

Main Points:

- The 14th five-year plan highlights a number of key strategic projects to be pursued as a priority. The projects include:
- Construction of the first dam in Tibet on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo or Brahmaputra, which refers to the sections of the river in Tibet just before it enters India in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Constructing a Sichuan-Tibet railway line near the India border.
- The plan pushes for attaining self-sufficiency in emerging industries including the Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- The plan also emphasized to open up the access to the key border highways including the G219 national highway which runs along entire length of India-China border in Xinjiang and Tibet region.
- The construction of coastal nuclear power plants and power transmission channels.
- The construction of railway from Ya'an in Sichuan to Nyingchi in Tibet is a key infrastructure project.
- China has also called to advance the preparatory work in order to build a railway line from Xigaze in Tibet along Tibet-Nepal border.

India's Concern:

India has expressed concerns over the four previously announced dams on the upper and middle reaches.

- In 2015 China operationalized its first hydropower project at Zangmu in Tibet, while three other dams at Dagou, Jiexu and Jiacha are being developed, all on the upper and middle reaches of the river.
- The impact of the dams on downstream flows is not clear, and the Indian officials are monitoring flows of the river closely, both through independent assessments and using the hydrological data that China provides under a bilateral arrangement between both the countries.

- The officials have however highlighted that, the Brahmaputra is not entirely dependent on the upstream flows. 35% of the basis is in India.
- Now, China's approval to construct the Dams possibly on lower reaches and at Great Bend of river Brahmaputra near border is a cause of worry because this location across the border from Arunachal Pradesh in an ecologically sensitive region.

International Women's Day (IWD) 2021:



International Women's Day 2021 was celebrated on 8th of March with theme #ChooseToChallenge.

It indicates that a "challenged world is an alert world, and from challenge comes change".

Background of IWD:

- ❖ International Women's Day (IWD) is a global holiday celebrated annually on March 8 to commemorate the cultural, political, and socio-economic achievements of women.
- ❖ It is also a focal point in the women's rights movement, bringing attention to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence against women.

- ❖ The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity.
- ❖ IWD has occurred for well over a century with the first gathering held in 1911.
- ❖ After women gained suffrage in Soviet Russia in 1917 (the beginning of the February Revolution), IWD was made a national holiday on March 8.
- ❖ It was subsequently celebrated on that date by the socialist movement and communist countries.
- ❖ The holiday was associated with far-left movements and governments until its adoption by the global feminist movement in the late 1960s.
- ❖ IWD became a mainstream global holiday following its adoption by the United Nations in 1977.

Quad Leaders' Virtual Summit:



The first Quad Leaders' summit was held on March 12, 2021.

- In a move to further enhance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, the top leaders of US, India, Japan and Australia held the first

meeting of 'Quadrilateral Security Dialogue', also known as the Quad dialogue virtually.

Highlights:

- ❖ Prime Ministers of India Narendra Modi, United States President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga also participated in the event.
- ❖ This is the first meeting between Modi and Biden since the latter was elected US president last year.
- ❖ At the meet, Biden, in his opening remarks, said the Quad will be a vital arena for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, and he described the alliance as a new mechanism to boost cooperation and raise mutual ambition.
- ❖ The four countries plan to establish a series of working groups that will focus on the following:
 1. Climate change
 2. Critical and emerging technologies
 3. Working towards setting of technology standards and norms
 4. Jointly developing some of the critical technologies of the future
- ❖ The Quad summit, among other things, finalised a landmark initiative under which huge investments will be made in India to create additional production capacities to roll out a billion coronavirus vaccine doses by 2022 for exports to the Indo-Pacific region.
- ❖ They also discussed about the opportunities to collaborate so as to

ensure a safe, equitable and affordable vaccines in Indo-Pacific region.

About Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD):

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, also known as the Quad) is an Inter-governmental security forum.
- It comprises of 4 countries namely India, the United States, Japan and Australia.
- The forum is maintained by semi-regular summits, military drills and information between member countries.
- The Quad grouping first came into being in 2004 in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami.
- In the year 2007, Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe proposed the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.
- The forum was joined by the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Vice President of the US Dick Cheney, Prime Minister of Australia John Howard.
- This diplomatic and military arrangement is taken as a response to increasing Chinese economic and military power.
- In November 2017, India, Japan, the US and Australia gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the Quad to develop a new strategy

to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence.

- In Manila, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of Australia, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, and President Donald Trump of the United States agreed to revive the security pact in order to confront China militarily and diplomatically in the South China Sea.

India Polity

Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2021:



The Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2021 has now been formally passed by both the houses of the parliament.

Key Highlights:

- ❖ Rajya Sabha cleared the bill on the 10 March 2021 through voice vote while the Lok Sabha had cleared it on 12 February, 2021.
- ❖ The legislation seeks to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.
- ❖ It comprises of the provisions of dealing with the domestic and international arbitration.
- ❖ It also defines the law to conduct conciliation proceedings.

- ❖ The Bill replaces the Ordinance comprising of the same provisions that was promulgated on November 4, 2020.

Provisions of the Bill:

- ❖ The legislation seeks to ensure that all stakeholders get an opportunity to seek an unconditional stay on enforcement of arbitral awards where the arbitration agreement or contract is induced by fraud or corruption.
- ❖ The bill comprises of the provision of “Automatic stay on awards”. Earlier, the act of 1996 had allowed the party to file application in order to set aside the order given in the arbitration proceeding.
- ❖ It specifies that the court can stay the arbitral award, even if there is pendency of setting aside of application, when the court is satisfied that relevant arbitration agreement or contract or making of award was induced by fraud or corruption.
- ❖ Schedule seven of the principal act (Act of 1996) specifies some qualifications, experience, and accreditation norms for the arbitrators. The arbitrator must be:
 - ❖ An advocate under the Advocates Act, 1961 along with the 10 years of experience
 - ❖ An officer of Indian Legal Service.
 - ❖ The bill of 2021 removes the Schedule seven for arbitrators and mention that these qualifications, experience, and norms will only be specified under regulations by the regulators.
- ❖ The bill also aims at giving greater flexibility to the Arbitration Council

of India and helping in promotion of institutional arbitration.

About the Arbitration and Conciliation Act of 1996:

- ❖ The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 is the main governing law of the arbitration.
- ❖ The act was enacted with the aim of consolidating and amending the law related to the international commercial arbitration, domestic arbitration and enforcement of the foreign award.
- ❖ It also seeks to define the law related to the conciliation.

Tirath Singh Rawat:



Tirath Singh Rawat has recently been sworn-in as the new chief minister of Uttarakhand.

He was administered the oath of office by Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya at Raj Bhawan in Dehradun.

The Bharatiya Janata Party's member of Parliament from Pauri Garhwal, Tirath Singh Rawat, is the 10th Chief Minister of the Uttarakhand.

He took the charge of the top position after the resignation of Trivendra Singh Rawat amid the internal conflict.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has 56 MLAs in the 70-member state Assembly.

About Tirath Singh Rajput:

- Tirath Singh Rawat was the state BJP president from 2013 to 2015 and is currently the party's national secretary.
- He has held important organisational positions both in the state and at the Centre.
- From 2012 to 2017, Tirath Singh Rawat was an MLA from the Chautakkhal constituency
- He also held the post of the first education minister of the newly formed Uttarakhand. In 2007, he was elected as the state general secretary of the state.
- Rawat had earlier served as the state vice president of Uttar Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha.

Uttarakhand: It is a state in northern India crossed by the Himalayas. Uttarakhand became the 27th state of the Republic of India On 9 November 2000.

It was carved from the Himalayan districts of Uttar Pradesh. Its winter Capital is Dehradun and summer capital is Gairsain.

The Chief Minister and the Governor of Uttarakhand are Tirath Singh Rajput and Baby Rani Maurya respectively.

Deshbhakti Budget:



Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi Manish Sisodia recently presented a ₹69,000 crore

'Deshbhakti Budget' for 2021-22 in Delhi Assembly.

Key Points:

- This is the highest budget size presented by any Delhi government so far
- Sisodia, who also holds the Finance portfolio, presented the budget on March 9, 2021 with provisions seeking to inspire patriotism in the run-up to the 75th Independence Day, free COVID-19 vaccination, and a vision for "India at 2047".
- Delhi government's 2021-22 budget is based on 'deshbhakti' or patriotism theme.
- This will entail placing 500 national flags across the city, like the one in Connaught Place. Rs 45 crore have been set aside for this head.
- Rs 5,328 crore have been allocated for Jahan Jhuggi Wahan Makan or the in-situ rehabilitation of slum dwellers while another Rs 1,550 for development in unauthorised colonies of Delhi.
- In addition, Rs 10 crore each have been set aside for events and programmes on the lives and contribution of BR Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh.

Following Initiatives have also been clubbed under this particular head -

- Starting a youth mentorship programme for underprivileged students,
- Arranging free Yoga camps for small groups of people,
- Starting a Delhi armed forces academy to prepare children for recruitment in the armed forces

- Giving Rs 1 crore to families of police officials and defence personnel who die in the line of duty
- Setting up of Mohalla Clinics in Delhi which will be meant exclusively for women patients starting this year. As many as 100 such clinics would be started in the first phase.
- Mr. Sisodia also announced that the Delhi government aims to bid for hosting the 2048 Olympic Games.

It is a dream project and part of the Aam Aadmi Party government's vision for the country

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav:



Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav is a series of events that have been organised by the Government of India (GoI) to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

Key Points:

- ❖ The curtain raiser activities of the Mahotsav began from March 12 and will continue to August 15, 2022.
- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' event on 12 March 2021 by flagging off a 241-mile march from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Gujarat's Navsari district to mark the 75 years of India's Independence.

- ❖ PM Modi before flagging off the padyatra also launched the Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav website. He addressed the crowd on the occasion.
- ❖ Several events were held across country to mark the occasion.
- ❖ The mega event will be witnessing the inauguration of activities that have been planned under the theme 'India@75' such as a website, film, Aatmanirbhar Charkha, song, and Aatmanirbhar incubator.
- ❖ In addition to these programmes, the Zonal Cultural Centres and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under the Youth Affairs Ministry, Ministry of Culture, and TRIFED have also planned various activities to mark the occasion.

Background:

- ❖ The Union government had constituted a National Committee to celebrate 75 years of the country's Independence.
- ❖ The Centre also formed a National Implementation Committee and a Committee of Secretaries to guide the programs that will be undertaken by various Ministries.
- ❖ The Committee is to provide policy direction and guidelines for formulation of programs for the commemoration of 75th anniversary of Indian Independence, at the national and international levels.
- ❖ The first meeting of the National Committee to commemorate India's 75th Independence Day "Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav" was held on

March 8, 2021, under the chairmanship of Minister Narendra Modi.

- ❖ The new committee consists of 259 eminent citizens from different walks of life as members.
- ❖ At the meeting, PM Modi had informed that 5 pillars have been decided for the celebration of the 75 years. These are:
 1. Freedom Struggle
 2. Ideas at 75
 3. Achievements at 75
 4. Actions at 75
 5. Resolve at 75
- ❖ Various members of the National Committee attended the meeting including Governors, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, political leaders, scientists, officials, spiritual Leaders, media personalities and eminent persons from other walks of life.

Baton of Honor:



President Ram Nath Kovind recently presented a "Baton of Honor" and a letter of appreciation Kiran Bedi at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The former Puducherry lieutenant governor received a Baton of Honor decorated with the emblem of the Indian Republic and the appreciation letter recognizing her service in the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Kiran Bedi was removed as the Lieutenant

Governor of Puducherry on February 16, 2021 by the President of India and Tamilisai Soundararajan took additional charge as the Lieutenant Governor on February 18.

India Policy

Gazette Notification Regarding Airbags:



The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has recently issued a Gazette notification regarding mandatory provision of an airbag for passengers seated on the front seat of a vehicle, next to the driver.

Highlights:

- According to the notification, the Ministry has mandated that the vehicles manufactured on and after the first day of April 2021, in the case of new models, and 31st day of August, 2021, in the case of existing models, shall be fitted with airbag for the person occupying the front seat, other than the driver.
- The ministry added that this mandate is based on the Supreme Court committee's suggestions on road safety.
- The move aimed at improving passenger safety in case of accidents and averting loss of lives would come into force for all vehicles manufactured on and after 1 April.

- It also adds that the front passenger airbag will have to meet AIS 145 amendment till the corresponding BIS specifications are tabulated.
- The latest mandate is for all existing models in the M1 category — passenger motor vehicles having not more than eight seats in addition to the driver's.

What are airbags?

- An airbag is a vehicle occupant-restraint system using a bag designed to inflate extremely quickly, then quickly deflate during a collision.
- It consists of the airbag cushion, a flexible fabric bag, an inflation module, and an impact sensor.
- Airbags are some of the most basic safety features present in modern cars the world over

Why do we need airbags?

- An airbag pops up as a protective cushion between the passenger and the car's dashboard during a collision.
- In moderate to severe frontal crashes, front airbags are designed to inflate in order to prevent a person's head and chest from contacting hard structures in the vehicle.

Road safety concern in India:

- Road safety is a serious concern in India.
- As per a recent World Bank report, India accounts for 10% of all road crash victims in the world.
- In a country where 415 people die in road accidents every day, an airbag can literally be a lifesaver.

- This mandate will make entry-level cars safer as manufacturers have skipped on safety by offering only a driver-side airbag, including two of the largest carmakers in India.

Some of the other safety features in automobiles are:

- Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS)
- Driver and passenger seat belt reminder
- Speed Alert System
- Reverse Parking Sensors
- Manual override for central locking system

Schemes Of Women and Child Development Ministry:



The Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) has announced that all major schemes of the Ministry have been classified under 3 umbrella schemes for their effective implementation and of various programmes and schemes of the Ministry of WCD.

The 3 umbrella schemes are as follows:

1. Mission Poshan 2.0
2. Mission Vatsalya
3. Mission Shakti

Schemes included under the Umbrella Scheme:

Mission Poshan 2.0:

- ❖ According to the ministry, the government is merging the supplementary nutrition programme and Poshan Abhiyan to launch Mission POSHAN 2.0.
- ❖ Mission POSHAN 2.0 will look into ways to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach, and outcomes.
- ❖ In budget 2021-22, an amount of Rs 20,105 crore has been allocated to Mission POSHAN 2.0.

Mission VATSALYA:

- ❖ Mission VATSALYA will look into child protection services and child welfare services.
- ❖ It has been allocated Rs 900 crore in the budget.

Mission Shakti:

- ❖ Mission Shakti will consist of policies and schemes for protection and empowerment of women.
- ❖ The schemes covered under Mission Shakti will be:
 - One-Stop Centre
 - Mahila Police Volunteer
 - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
 - Women's helpline
 - Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana
- ❖ In budget 2021-22, an amount Rs 3,109 crore has been allocated.

Programmes To Promote Women Entrepreneurship:



The programmes launched by Government of India (GoI) to promote women entrepreneurship across the country are being implemented as follows:

Pradhan Mantri YUVA (PM YUVA) Yojana:

- ❖ The Ministry of Skill Development is implementing Pradhan Mantri YUVA (PM YUVA) Yojana, a pilot scheme, for creating an enabling ecosystem through entrepreneurship education, training, advocacy and easy access to entrepreneurship network.

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):

- ❖ Ministry of MSME is implementing the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), which has the target to generate self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises for non-farm sector.

Economic Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs and Startups by Women:

- ❖ Ministry of Skill Development is implementing the pilot project, 'Economic Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs and Startups by Women' in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Interna-

tionale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Germany.

Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs):

- ❖ Ministry of Rural Development is implementing Skill development program through Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) enabling a trainee to take Bank credit and start his/her own Micro-enterprise.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):

- ❖ Ministry of Rural Development is also implementing Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) which aims at eliminating rural poverty through promotion of multiple livelihoods for each rural poor household.

As informed by the Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Raj Kumar Singh in a written reply in Rajya Sabha, under the Sub-scheme i.e.

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) covered under DAY-NRLM, a total of 194,144 enterprises have been set-up (up to 31st January, 2021).

MT Swarna Krishna:



Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping & Waterways recently flagged off the first “All Women Officers’ Sailing” on MT Swarna Krishna from Jawaharlal Nehru Port virtually.

The all women crew of onboard Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) vessel created history as this is the first time in the world maritime history that a ship is being sailed by all women officers.

The crew was flagged off as a part of SCI's ongoing Diamond Jubilee celebrations and also to commemorate International Women's Day on 8 March.

About:

- MT SWARNA KRISHNA is a Oil Products Tanker that was built in 2010 and is being operated by Shipping Corporation of India (SCI).
- It's carrying capacity is 73655 t DWT and her current draught is reported to be 8.5 meters.
- Her length overall (LOA) is 228.02 meters and her width is 32.24 meters.

G R Chintala:

Persons in News



He is the chairman of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) who recently assumed charge as the chairman of APRACA (Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association).

He has taken over from DPK Gunasekera, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Ceylon.

About the APRACA:

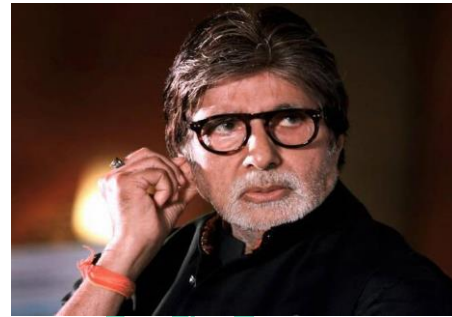
- ❖ The Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) is an association of institutions involved in agricultural, rural and microfinance policy and development, representing 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.
- ❖ It was established in 1977.

About NABARD:

- ❖ National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is an apex development finance institution under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- ❖ NABARD was established on the recommendations of B.Sivaraman Committee (by Act 61, 1981 of Parliament) on 12 July 1982 to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act 1981.

- ❖ It is India's specialized bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in India.
- ❖ It was founded on 12 July 1982 and is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Amitabh Bachchan:



Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan has been chosen as the recipient of the prestigious 2021 FIAF Award by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF).

The 78-year-old veteran actor will be the first Indian cinema personality to be bestowed with the FIAF Award for his dedication and contribution to the preservation of the world's film heritage.

The award will be presented to him on March 19, 2021, during a virtual event, by Hollywood filmmakers and previous recipients of the FIAF Award, Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan.

He was nominated for the award by the FIAF affiliate Film Heritage Foundation which is a not-for-profit organization founded by Shivendra Singh Dungarpur a filmmaker & archivist. This foundation is dedicated to preserve, restore, document, exhibit and study the film heritage of India.

About FIAF:

- ❖ FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) is a worldwide organisation of film archives and museums from across the world.
- ❖ FIAF was founded on 17 June 1938.
- ❖ FIAF is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.
- ❖ The FIAF Award celebrates a personality whose experience in the field of cinema underlines the objectives and goals of the Federation.
- ❖ FIAF is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its annual Award in 2021

Udupi Ramachandra Rao:



Google recently celebrated the 89th birthday of renowned Indian professor and scientist Udupi Ramachandra Rao who is also remembered as "India's Satellite Man, on 10th March 2021 through its "Google Doodle"

About Udupi Ramachandra Rao:

- ❖ Udupi Ramachandra Rao (1932 – 2017) was an Indian space scientist and chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- ❖ Rao is remembered as the "India's Satellite Man".
- ❖ He supervised the 1975 launch of India's first satellite --"Aryabhata"- one of over 20 satellites he developed that transformed much of ru-

ral India by advancing communication and meteorological services.

- ❖ He developed rocket technology such as the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), which has launched over 250 satellites.
- ❖ He was also the Chairman of the Governing Council of the Physical Research Laboratory at Ahmedabad and Nehru Planetarium at Bengaluru and chancellor of the Indian Institute for Space Science and Technology (IIST) at Thiruvananthapuram.

Awards:

- ❖ Professor Rao was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 1976, and Padma Vibhushan in 2017.
- ❖ He was inducted into the Satellite Hall of Fame, Washington in 2013. With this he became the first Indian to be inducted.
- ❖ He was also to be inducted in International Astronautics Federation (IAF) in 2016.
- ❖ He became the first Indian again to achieve this honour.

Dr. GP Samanta:



He has recently been appointed as new Chief Statistician of India (CSI) by the Central government for a period of two years.

He is India's fourth CSI.

He replaces Kshatrapati Shivaji who was holding an additional charge of the post since September 2020.

Dr Samanta was currently serving as an adviser in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Department Of Statistics and Information Management.

He will also serve as the Secretary of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The RBI had felicitated Samanta with the prestigious Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis award in August 2010.

Mahamadou Issoufou:



The incumbent President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou has recently won the "2020 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership", the world's largest leadership prize, worth \$5 million.

The 69-year-old Issoufou is the sixth winner of the Ibrahim Prize since it was introduced in 2006, by Sudanese billionaire Mo Ibrahim's foundation to promote good governance in the world's poorest continent.

Issoufou is stepping down as president of Niger in April 2021, after serving two terms in office.

He first took office in 2011 and was then re-elected in 2016.

About Niger:

- ❖ Niger or the Niger, officially the Republic of the Niger, is a land-locked country in West Africa.
- ❖ It got its name after the Niger River.
- ❖ The country has some of the world's largest uranium deposits.
- ❖ The capital of Niger is Niamey.
- ❖ The currency used here is West African CFA franc.
- ❖ The current President of Niger is Mahamadou Issoufou.

Places in news

Super-75 Scholarship Scheme:



The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha recently launched "Super-75" scholarship schemes for meritorious girls.

Highlights:

- ❖ The scheme was launched on the occasion of International Women's Day 2021.
- ❖ The basic aim of this scholarship scheme is to facilitate the education and entrepreneurship of women.
- ❖ Apart from this, Lt Governor Sinha also announced a new scheme named 'Tejaswini'. This scheme has been launched under 'Mission Youth-J&K'.
- ❖ Under Tejaswini, financial assistance of Rs 5 lakhs will be provided to the girls between the age group of 18 to 35 years to start their business.

About Super-75 scholarship scheme:

- ❖ The super-75 scholarship scheme will support the education of meritorious girls from poor families, so that they can excel in streams like medicine, engineering, ITI (Industrial training institutes) and humanity and contribute to nation-building.

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K):

- ❖ Jammu and Kashmir is a region administered by India as a Union Territory.
- ❖ Provisions for the formation of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir were contained within the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which was passed by both houses of the Parliament of India in August 2019.
- ❖ The current Lieutenant Governor of J&K is GC Murmu.

STEM for Girls:



The Samagra Sikhsha Uttarakhand, the Government of Uttarakhand's education mission recently signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with IBM India.

Main Points of the MoU:

- ❖ The MoU was signed to introduce the 'IBM STEM for Girls' program in 130 secondary and higher secondary schools across five districts in the state.
- ❖ The collaboration is part of a three-year program between IBM and Uttarakhand State Government with the American India Foundation as the implementation partner to increase the participation of girls and women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) careers.
- ❖ The program will advance the skills and careers of close to 25,600 students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields.
- ❖ The 'IBM STEM for Girls' program features a comprehensive approach that builds technical capabilities as well as life and self-actualization skills.

About STEM for Girls:

- ❖ 'STEM for Girls' is an IBM Corporate Social Responsibility initiative.
- ❖ It was launched India in 2019.

- ❖ The STEM for Girls initiative for IBM is lead by Jasbir Kaur.
- ❖ This initiative is also active in Taiwan, south Korea and Canada.

Aim:

- ❖ The STEM for Girls initiative is primarily aimed at improving education-to-work and career pathways for girls who are studying in Government schools.
- ❖ The program includes imparting training in digital literacy, coding and technology skills, 21st-century skills, and career development to enable girls' empowerment and increase their interest in STEM education and careers.

About International Business Machines Corporation (IBM):

- ❖ IBM, in full International Business Machines Corporation is a leading American computer manufacturer, with a major share of the market both in the United States and abroad.
- ❖ Its headquarters are in Armonk, New York.
- ❖ The company began in 1911, founded in Endicott, New York, as the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (CTR) and was renamed "International Business Machines" in 1924.
- ❖ The current CEO of IBM is Arvind Krishna.

Uttarakhand:

- ❖ It is a state in northern India crossed by the Himalayas. Uttarakhand became the 27th state of the Republic of India on 9 November

2000. It was carved from the Himalayan districts of Uttar Pradesh. Its winter Capital is Dehradun and summer capital is Gairsain. The Chief Minister and the Governor of Uttarakhand are Tirath Singh Rajput and Baby Rani Maurya respectively.

Xcelerator Bengaluru Initiative:



- Karnataka Government recently launched the "Xcelerator Bangalore Initiative" to support women-owned micro-enterprises.

Highlights:

The state government presented the Budget for 2021-2021 on 8th March 2021 in which it has granted Rupees 37,188 crore for the women-centric programmes.

Similarly, the government is also encouraging the small scale or micro entrepreneurs, employees, working women, rural self-help groups with the help of several initiatives like prominent Elevate Women programme.

Key points about Xcelerator Bengaluru:

- The "Xcelerator Bengaluru" is a curated six-month accelerator programme.
- It seeks to provide support to women to help expand micro-enterprises owned by women.

- This initiative is jointly organised by the UBUNTU Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs' Associations, Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME) and Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI).
- It seeks to reach and scale 50,000 women led enterprises.
- It is co-designed and co-created with the help of practitioners in women entrepreneurship development organizations, successful entrepreneurs and academics.
- It is designed and executed in partnership with the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE) which is 37-year-old organization and is dedicated to empower the women by entrepreneurship development.

About FKCCI:

- Mysore chamber of commerce was founded by Bharat Ratna Sir M. Visvesvaraya, who was an engineering genius, a statesman, a visionary, and a great Institution builder on 8th May 1916.
- The first President of Chambers till 1920 was Mr William Cumming Rose.
- Mysore chamber was later converted to the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI).
- It as an apex organization for Trade & Services sectors and Industries in Karnataka.

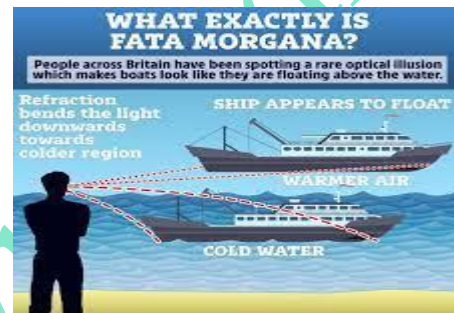
Karnataka:

- It is a state in the south western region of India. It was formed on 1

November 1956, with the passage of the States Reorganisation Act. Originally known as the State of Mysore, it was renamed Karnataka in 1973. Its capital city is Bangalore. The current Chief Minister and Governor of Karnataka are B. S. Yediyurappa and Vajubhai Rudabhavi Vala respectively.

Science and Technology

Superior Mirage:



Recently a large tanker appeared to be floating off the south coast of England in an optical illusion caused by a rare weather phenomenon called the superior mirage.

The extraordinary optical illusion was spotted by David Morris who was walking along the coast by Falmouth in Cornwall. He captured it on camera.

About Superior Mirage:

- A mirage is a naturally occurring optical phenomenon in which light rays bend via refraction to produce a displaced image of distant objects or the sky. The word comes to English via the French mirer, from the Latin mirari, meaning "to look at, to wonder at".
- In contrast to a hallucination, a mirage is a real optical phenomenon

that can be captured on camera, since light rays are actually refracted to form the false image at the observer's location.

- There are two types of mirages. They are inferior mirage (meaning lower) and superior mirage (meaning higher).
- An inferior mirage occurs when you have a dense layer of cold air sitting on above of your line of sight, with a layer of less dense warmer air below your line of sight.
- A superior mirage is seen above a flat surface of much lower temperature than the air above it. Superior mirages occur because of the weather condition known as a temperature inversion. Passing through the temperature inversion, the light rays are bent down, and so the image appears above the true object, hence the name superior. Superior mirages tend to be more stable than inferior mirages, as cold air has no tendency to move up and warm air has no tendency to move down.
- The mirage is common in the Arctic Circle but can only very rarely be seen during the UK in winter.

Fugaku:



The world's most powerful supercomputer Fugaku is now fully developed in Japan, and the machine is available for research use.

Highlights:

- The Japanese scientific research institute called RIKEN and Fujitsu started developing the “Fugaku” six years ago.
- Fugaku has been named after an alternative name for Mount Fuji.
- In April 2020, it was tested particularly in projects to combat COVID-19 pandemic.
- Now, this supercomputer is fully ready and developed in Japan and is now available for research use.
- The Research Organization for the Information Science and Technology (RIST) of Japan has selected some 74 projects which will use this supercomputer in the financial year 2021.
- RIST has also called for proposals for new projects in several categories, and invited researchers who are interested to apply.
- This supercomputer has been developed with the aim of making the device core of the computing infrastructure of Japan.

About Fugaku

- It is a key national technology that has been developed with the goal to achieve research results that ultimately will help in building a long-lived and healthy society, better energy use and disaster mitigation.
- It also aims to establish the government's vision of making “ultra-smart Society 5.0”.
- The supercomputer has topped the Top500 list, which is a “Supercomputer benchmark index”, for the second year in line.

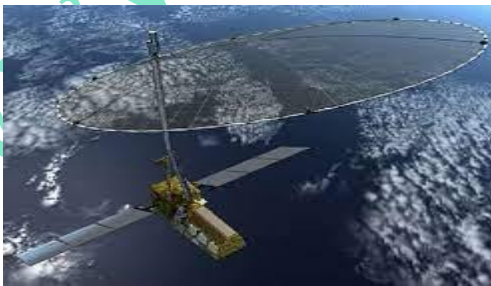
- The computer has 100 times the application performance of K supercomputer.
- It has been developed to implement high-resolution, large-scale and long-duration simulation.
- It started development in the year 2014 as the successor to the K computer.

It is built with the Fujitsu A64FX microprocessor.

Japan:

- Japan is an island country located in East Asia.
- It is made up of 6,852 islands.
- The Japanese name for Japan is Nihon or Nippon which means sun origin.
- It is bordered by the Sea of Japan to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east, and spans from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and Philippine Sea in the south.
- Tokyo is the capital of Japan.
- The currency used there is Japanese Yen.
- The current Prime Minister of Japan is Yoshihide Suga.

Joint Earth Observation Satellite Mission Radar:



ISRO recently completed the development of a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)

capable of producing extremely high-resolution images for a joint earth observation satellite mission with the US space agency NASA.

Key points of NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR):

- NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) is a joint collaboration for a dual-frequency L and S-band SAR for earth observation.
- It is the first satellite mission which will use two different radar frequencies called L-band and S-band.
- These radar frequencies will be used to measure the changes in Earth's surface less than a centimetre across
- The mission is targeted to launch in early 2022 from ISRO's Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 km north of Chennai.
- The payload was shipped from the Ahmedabad-based Space Applications Centre (SAC) to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) of NASA.

About the NASA-ISRO Collaboration:

- ❖ NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) had signed a partnership on September 30, 2014, to collaborate on and launch NISAR.
- ❖ NASA is providing the mission's L-band SAR, a high-rate communication subsystem for science data, GPS receivers, a solid-state recorder and payload data subsystem.
- ❖ ISRO is providing the spacecraft bus, the S-band radar, the launch vehicle and associated launch services for the mission, whose goal is

to make global measurements of the causes and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.

Purpose of the Mission:

- ❖ The mission will provide a means of highly spatial and temporally complex processes such as ecosystem disturbances, ice sheet collapses and natural hazards like volcanoes, landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis.
- ❖ It will measure the changing ecosystems of Earth, dynamic surfaces & ice masses.
- ❖ The mission will also provide information regarding the biomass, natural hazards, groundwater and sea level rise.

ISRO:

- ISRO is the space agency of the Government of India (GoI) and was formed in 15 August 1969.
- It superseded the erstwhile “Indian National Committee for Space Research” (INCOSPAR) which was established in 1962 by the efforts of Independent India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his close aide and scientist Vikram Sarabhai.
- In 1972, the Government of India had set up a Space Commission and the Department of Space (DOS), bringing ISRO under the DOS.
- ISRO then embarked on its mission to provide the Nation space based services and to develop the technologies to achieve the same independently.

- Its vision is to “harness space technology for natural development while pursuing space science research & planetary exploration”.
- ISRO built India's first Satellite Aryabhata. It is headquartered in Bangalore, India.
- The current Chairman of ISRO is K Sivan.

NASA:

- NASA is an independent agency of the United States Federal Government responsible for the civilian space program, as well as aeronautics and aerospace research.
- NASA was established in 1958, succeeding the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).
- It is headquartered in Washington, D.C., United States.
- The Administrator of NASA is Jim Bridenstine and the Deputy Administrator of NASA is James Morhard.

Lunar Space Station:



The space agency's of China and Russia have recently signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) on behalf of their national governments, to jointly construct a lunar space station that will be open to all countries.

The MoU was officially signed between the Chinese space agency, China National Space Administration (CNSA) and the

Russian space agency Roscosmos, on March 09, 2021.

About International Lunar Research Station:

- Dubbed as the “International Scientific Lunar Station (ISLS)”, will be a complex of research and experimental facilities which will be created on the surface or in orbit of the moon.
- The complex will be designed to conduct multipurpose and multi-disciplinary research work.
- The goal of setting up ISLS is to strengthen research cooperation and promote the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in the interests of all mankind.

Sports

BWF Swiss Open Super 300:



India's ace shuttler PV Sindhu recently won a silver medal in the BWF Swiss Open Super 300 in the final of the women's singles.

The BWF Swiss Open Super 300 event was held at Basel, Switzerland.

The World No. 7 Sindhu lost to World No. 3 and reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin.

Winners List of Swiss Open 2021:

- Men's Singles: Viktor Axelsen (Denmark) beat Kunlavut Vitidsarn (Thailand).
- Women's Singles: Carolina Marin (Spain) beat PV Sindhu (India).
- Men's Doubles: Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen (Denmark) beat Mark Lamsfuss-Marvin Seidel (Germany).
- Mixed Doubles: Thom Gicquel-Delphine Delrue (France) beat Denmark pair, Mathias Christiansen-Alexandra Boje.

Matteo Pellicon World ranking series:



In wrestling, the World Championship bronze medallist Bajrang Punia his second successive gold medal at the Matteo Pallicone ranking series event in Rome, Italy.

The star wrestler defeated Mongolia's Tulga Tumur Ochir 2-2 by criteria in the 65kg freestyle event final.

He had won the previous gold at this competition in 2020 by beating Jordan Oliver of the USA in the final.

Apart from this, the ace India woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat won the gold medal in the 53kg title.

The 26-year-old Vinesh beat Canada's Diana Weicker 4-0.

ICC World Test Championship Final:



The Indian Cricket Team have qualified for the inaugural ICC World Test Championship final after beating England in an innings and 25 runs in the fourth and final Test in Ahmedabad on 6th March.

New Zealand had already qualified for the WTC final with 420 points from 11 Tests with 7 wins and 4 losses.

The World Test Championship final will be played at the Lord's Cricket Ground in London from June 18.

ICC Player of Month Awards for February:



India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was awarded the ICC Player of the Month award for February.

Ashwin beat England captain Joe Root and West Indies' Kyle Mayers to the award.

He was awarded for his brilliant performance against England in a four-match Test series in England on Tuesday to qualify for the World Test final.

Meanwhile, England opener Tammy Beaumont won the ICC Women's Player of the Month for February.

Beaumont was the overwhelming winner after she played three ODIs in February against New Zealand where she passed fifty in each of these, totalling 231 runs.

She beat her teammate Natalie Sciver and New Zealand's Brooke Halliday to the award.

About ICC:

- ❖ International Cricket Committee (ICC) is the world governing body of cricket.
- ❖ It was founded as the Imperial Cricket Conference in 15 June 1909 by representatives from Australia, England and South Africa.
- ❖ It was renamed as the International Cricket Conference in 1965, and took up its current name in 1989.
- ❖ The ICC, currently, has 104 member nations.
- ❖ It organizes world championship events such as Cricket World Cup, Women's Cricket World Cup, ICC T20 World Cup, ICC Women's T20 World Cup, ICC Champions Trophy and Under-19 Cricket World Cup.
- ❖ The current Chairman of ICC is Shashank Manohar and the Chief Executive is Manu Sahney.

BBC's Indian sportswoman of the year:



World rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy has recently won the second edition of the BBC Indian Sportswoman-of-the-Year award.

The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) director-general Tim Davie hosted the virtual awards ceremony.

The Lifetime Achievement award went to veteran athlete Anju Bobby George, the only Indian athlete to have won a world championship medal in long jump in 2003.

The Emerging Player-of-the-Year award was won by 19-year-old young shooter Manu Bhaker. This new category was added to this year's BBC ISWOTY.

Bhaker, won two golds at the ISSF World Cup in 2018, followed by gold at the Youth Olympics and Commonwealth Games gold with a record to boot.

About BBC ISWOTY:

- ❖ The BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year Award (BBC ISWOTY) is an initiative by the BBC India to celebrate and honour sportswomen from India who have excelled in their respective fields.
- ❖ The BBC ISWOTY was first initiated in 2019.
- ❖ The first edition of the award took place in 2020, and P. V. Sindhu was the winner.

Mithali Raj:



The veteran Indian women's cricketer Mithali Raj has created history by becoming the first Indian woman cricketer that has completed 10,000 international runs in all the cricket formats.

She has also become the second woman cricketer at the international level to complete 10000 runs.

She achieved the milestone of 10,000 after she hit a boundary off the Anne Bosch in 28th over of Indian innings in the ongoing third ODI match against South Africa.

Her Other Achievements:

- ❖ She is the recipient of several National and International awards.
- ❖ She won the Arjuna Award in the year 2003 and Padma Shri in the year 2015.
- ❖ She is the only female cricketer who has captained in more than one ICC ODI World Cup Final that is in the year 2005 and 2017.
- ❖ She also became the first woman to complete 20 years in International cricket in the year 2019.

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