



# Monthly **GK** Mania



December - 2019



### **The Massive Locust Invasion in Gujarat**

The farmlands in the Gujarat border got alarmed from locust invasion. The locusts from Sudan and Eritrea on the coast of the Red Sea have entered the villages of Gujarat and Rajasthan via Pakistan Sindh province. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had alerted this trajectory of locusts through its Desert Locust Information Service. This was also tracked and predicted by Locust Warning Organization (LWO) in Jodhpur. But no precautionary measures were taken. According to FAO, an average swarm destroys crops that can feed 2,500 people per year.

### **Atal Bhujal Yojana**

In December 2019 the Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved 'Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)' in New Delhi. It is a central sector scheme with an outlay of Rs 6000 crores meant to improve groundwater management. It will be implemented for a 5-year period (2020-21 till 2024-2025 via community participation in identified priority areas in 7 States viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

### **Railway recruitment now via UPSC civil services exams**

The Railway board made an announcement regarding its new recruitment which will be done from now onwards through Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil Services Exams. Prior to this, the Union Cabinet had given nod to the big-ticket reforms in the railways by merging its eight cadres and department services into one single entity- the 'Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS)'. Now just like UPC aspirants, the Indian Railways aspirants will have to appear for their UPSC prelims after which they will be able to indicate their preference for IRMS under 5 specialties. Among them, four will be engineering specialties (including that of stores (department)) for 'technical' operations comprising of civil, mechanical, electrical and telecom, and one 'non-technical' specialty (or non-engineering) that will be recruiting officers for personnel, traffic, and accounts. For non-engineering specializations, anyone from humanities can apply for handling accounts, traffic and personnel service. All of them will be promoted at the same time. Further, the Chairman of Railway Board, who will also be CEO of the national transporter, will be an officer of the Indian Railway Service and not from any other service. And officers from Indian Railways who have experience of 35 yrs will only be posted as Chairman/CEO and the Chairman shall be cadre controlling officer responsible for Human Resources (HR) with assistance from DG (HR).

### **India's first Transit-Oriented Development Project**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah laid the foundation stone for the country's first transit-oriented development (TOD) project at Karkardooma in New Delhi. The proposed project will be a state-of-the-art infrastructure zone, 'East Delhi Hub' with a central massive green lung of about 10 acres as well as national capital's tallest tower- a 48-story signature tower in east Delhi. Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MHUA) and National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) will complete it in the next 3.5 years.

### **Addition of 1 lakh senior division NCC seats**

Secretary Ajay Kumar of Defence Ministry broke the news of the approval of an additional one lakh senior division NCC seats on a self-financing basis. Approximately 100 to 150 schools and colleges will be benefited from this decision. The scheme will be implemented in 2020-21 as a pilot project. The distribution of additional one lakh cadets to all 17 state directorates will be conducted by the headquarters of the Director-General of the National Cadet Corps.

### **India's first long-distance CNG bus**

Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated India's first long-distance CNG bus equipped with CNG cylinders at a function in New Delhi that can travel around one thousand kilometers in a single fill. This first long-range interstate CNG bus will ply from Delhi to Dehradun and pretty soon more such buses will run from Delhi to Jaipur, Chandigarh, and Agra. The largest CNG distribution company in the country, Indraprastha Gas Limited has executed this project which is said to be a revolutionary step in reducing vehicular pollution.

### **The New Appointments**

Managing Director of Hiranandani Groups, Niranjan Hiranandani has got appointed as the new President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham). He succeeded Welspun Group Chairman Balkrishan Goenka. Assocham is looking forward to facing the economic challenges and is preparing to achieve the target of a \$5 trillion economy. Besides him, Chief General Manager of Department of Banking Operations and Development (DBoD) of the Reserve Bank of India, Ravi Mohan is the newly appointed chairman of Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF) Small Finance Bank (SFB). He has taken place of R Prabha. ESAF began its operations as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) in 1992. Besides them, Indian Foreign Service officer of 1984-batch, Harsh Vardhan Shringla has been appointed as the 33rd Foreign Secretary of India. The Senior Diplomat and Indian ambassador to the United States (US) will replace Vijay Gokhale whose two-year term is ending on January 29, 2020.

### **Hemant Soren: The Next Jharkhand CM**

Jharkhand, Grand Alliance leader Hemant Soren will take oath as the Chief Minister on the 29th of December 2019. Governor Draupadi Murmu had invited Soren to form the government after he was formally elected as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) legislature party leader. Soren had contested the Jharkhand Assembly election 2019 from two Assembly constituencies viz. Barhait and Dumka and won both of them. The JMM, Congress and RJD Alliance that gained a majority in the recently concluded Assembly polls. It had won 47 seats in the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly and snatched power from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which managed to win 25 Assembly constituencies in the 2019-Jharkhand polls. The Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajanatrik) won 3 constituencies, while the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) won just 1-1 seat each in the Jharkhand Assembly election polls. BJP leader and former Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das tendered his resignation to the Governor.

### **The Beginning of Digital Radio in 2024**

During the annual Akashvani awards function in New Delhi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar broke the information that the NDA government is planning to launch Digital Radio in 2024. According to him, the audio of digital radio will be more clear and its reach will be higher. Besides this, he conferred the annual Akashvani awards, which were instituted in 1974 to promote professional excellence and precipitate the best from the staff working at various radio stations and installations. On this occasion, Prasar Bharati Chairman Dr. A Surya Prakash applauded the huge credibility of this medium. It should be noted that Akashvani has one of the largest news gathering and dissemination apparatuses in the world.

### **Creation Of Chief Of Defence Staff post**

The Cabinet allowed the creation of the post of Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) which was earlier announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of his Independence Day address this year. This post of Chief of Defence Staff will be the rank of 4-Star General with salary equivalent to Service Chiefs and will head the Department of Military Affairs, which will be created under the aegis of Ministry of Defence and will function as its Secretary. In addition to this, the Cabinet also gave a nod to ex-post-facto for official amendments to the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019, that was moved and passed by the Lok Sabha on the 9th of December 2019. It is indeed a historic decision for bringing in reforms in the higher defense management in the country.

### **Assamese gained the stature of the state language**

On December 23, 2019, the Assam Cabinet approved the Assamese language as the state language of Assam. However, BTAD i.e. Bodoland Territorial Administrative Districts, Barak Valley and Hill

districts of Assam will continue to use Bengali as their official language. This has been done in the wake of rising insecurities among the Assamese population in the state at the advent of the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which has increased the wave of insecurity in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Central Government has plans of amending Articles in the constitution regarding this issue. Article 345 says that subject to the provisions of Article 346 and 347, the state legislature might adopt one or more languages to be used as official languages. Article 346 advocates that the states are authorized to decide on the language of communication amongst them and with the centre provided such a language should have been authorized by the centre. While Article 347 lays special provisions to the language spoken to a section of a population and the President if satisfied shall assent on the usage of the language.

### **National Mathematics Day**

22nd December 2019 was celebrated as National Mathematics Day to commemorate the 132nd birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan, who was born on 22nd December 1887, transformed and reshaped 20th-century mathematics via his contributions to number theory, mathematical analysis, infinite series, and continued fractions. In addition to this, he also discovered his own theorems and compiled as many as 3900 mathematical results and equations independently. His Prime and Theta discoveries had inspired further research on this mathematical subject. He along with British Mathematician G.H. Hardy had discovered the popular Hardy-Ramanujan number- '1729', which is the smallest number which can be represented as the sum of two different cubes in two different ways. This day was instituted in the year 2012 by Union Government headed by the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

### **The 66th National Film Awards**

On 23rd December 2019, Venkaiah Naidu presented national film awards. In the 66th edition of the awards, Akshay Kumar-starrer Hindi Movie 'Padman' has been named the Best Film On Social Issues and 'Badhaai Ho', starring Ayushmann Khurrana, got the Best Popular Film award. Veteran actor Surekha Sikri was presented with the best supporting actress award for 'Badhaai Ho'. Ayushmann Khurrana and Vicky Kaushal were adjudged as the Best Actors for their roles in 'Andhadhun' and 'Uri: The Surgical Strike', while Aditya Dhar was felicitated with the Best Director award for his debut film 'Uri: The Surgical Strike'. Keerthy Suresh welcomed the Best Actress award for Telugu film 'Mahanati'. Singer-lyricist Swanand Kirkire bagged the best-supporting actor award for Marathi film 'Chumbak'. 'Padmaavat' received the award for Best Choreography for the song 'Ghoomar', Sanjay Leela Bhansali was adjudged as the Best Music Director and Arijit Singh got selected as the Best Male Playback Singer on the song 'Vinte Dil in Padmavaat'. Bindhu Malini became the Best Female Playback Singer for her Song Maayavi Manave in Kannada movie 'Nathicharami'. Marathi movie 'Paani' has won the Best Film on Environment Conservation and Preservation award; Gujarati

movie ‘Hellaro’ received the Best Feature Film award; Kannada film ‘Ondalla Eradalla’ received Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration. ‘Son-Rise and the Secret Life of Frogs’ directed by Vibha Bakshi were chosen for the Best Non-Feature Film award. ‘Uttarakhand’ received the Most Film Friendly State award.

### **Kuldeep Singh Sengar received life imprisonment**

Recently Judge Dharmesh Sharma of Tis Hazari Court of Delhi spelled life imprisonment as well as a fine of rupees 25 lakhs for BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in Unnao rape and abduction case. In addition to this, he will have to give Rs 10 lakh as compensation to the victim. The exiled public servant had victimized a minor woman in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh in 2017. The guilty have been convicted under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code, read with Section 5 (aggravated penetrative sexual assault of a child) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), as the victim had been a minor at the time of the offense. The court also censured CBI for delaying the charge sheet and for its ‘patriarchal’ approach. According to the POCSO Act, there should be female officers in CBI to record the statement of victims in such cases, but in stark contrast, the victim was called multiple times to CBI’s office instead of (them) going to her residence and important information concerning witnesses’ statement was selectively leaked as an attempt to cloud over the matter.

### **Drones will destroy hidden Marijuana plants**

In December 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) decided to employ drones for destruction of marijuana (or Cannabis, psychoactive drug) plantations after their detection by satellites. The drones will spray chemicals in states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Haryana. It will be done under the modus operandi, which was also adopted by the United States. In 2018, 24,000 cases have been reported containing 414 tons of plants.

### **The 18th National Maritime Search and Rescue Board meeting**

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) organised the 18th edition of National Maritime Search and Rescue Board (NMSARB) meeting in New Delhi in which policy issues, guidelines & procedures were discussed at length and the evaluation of the efficacy of National Search and Rescue Plan (NSRP) was done. It focussed on various maritime safety issues and identified areas of improvement of Search and Rescue services. On this occasion, Merchant Vessel Asia Emerald III, Anand A Ambhire from Maharashtra, Indian Coast Guard Ships (ICGS) Sujoy and ICGS Vikram were awarded SAR Awards for their courageous rescue operations.



### **The 11th Regional Quality Conclave**

Quality Council of India (QCI) along with PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) organized the 11th Regional Quality Conclave (RQC) ‘Rudrapur RQC: Advance Manufacturing with Quality, Innovation & Technology Interventions’ on theme at Rudrapur, district Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand on 20th December 2019. This Conclave paved way for the Quality Council of India (QCI) to reach out to industries in the hilly regions of the country. The conclave permitted sessions on- Adding Value in Manufacturing and Supply Chain with Digital Transformation, Upskilling for Industry 4.0, Leadership and Engagement Strategies for Sustaining Innovation and Quality Culture and Mapping Organization’s Route to Quality.

### **Additional charge for R.N Ravi**

Governor of Nagaland, R.N Ravi has been given additional charge of state of Meghalaya in December 2019. Ravi has been a former intelligence official, specialized in the Northeast, who was appointed as the Governor of Nagaland in 2019 after an agreement between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaak-Muivah) in 2014. He has succeeded Tathagata Roy, who was governor of Meghalaya. It is worth recollecting here that Roy had some differences with the Meghalaya Government regarding ordinance of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in which the state cabinet sought mandatory registration of outsiders entering the state.

### **Deepak Punia: ‘Junior Freestyle Wrestler of the Year’**

United World Wrestling (UWW) adjudged Deepak Punia as the 2019 UWW’s ‘Junior Freestyle Wrestler of the Year’. The chosen one is the first Indian wrestler in 18 years to win a junior world title in 86 Kg freestyle category at the Junior World Championships held in Tallinn, Estonia in August 2019. Besides this, he is also the first Indian wrestler and the second from the country to get honoured by an international federation. Before him, Late Yashvir Singh was the first Indian to get recognition from International Amateur Wrestling Federation (FILA ) as ‘Coach of the Year’ in 2010.

### **BP Raju became the 2019 ‘India Cyber Cop of the Year’**

Deputy superintendent of Central Bureau of Investigation officer was presented the 2019 ‘India Cyber Cop of the Year’ award by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) - Data Security Council of India(DSCI) in the Annual Information Security Summit (AISS) held at Gurugram on 17th December 2019. He was honored for solving a fraud case in an online entrance exam conducted by an engineering college in Rajasthan. This award was conferred upon him by Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

### **RIL acquires 51.78% stake in Asteria aerospace**

RIL's wholly-owned subsidiary unit, Reliance Strategic Business Ventures Ltd (RSBVL) purchased a 51.78% stake in Asteria aerospace for Rs 23.12 crore in December 2019. This equity share capital will boost RSBVL's initiatives in the emerging technology sector. Reliance Strategic Business Ventures Ltd has a plan of investing Rs 125 crore more in Asteria if it succeeds in achieving the agreed target. Besides this, Reliance Strategic Business Ventures Ltd also acquired an 85 % stake in a homegrown start-up NowFloats Technologies for Rs 141.63 crore.

### **Chhattisgarh topped in “Digital States of India – A Comparative Analysis”**

Research and consulting organization, Coeus Age Consulting has released a report titled “Digital States of India – A Comparative Analysis” in which it has mapped all the States and Union Territories of India on their policy and infrastructure readiness and mission mode project's performance. Chhattisgarh topped the list followed by Maharashtra, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th place respectively. Haryana was found to have made the biggest leap in the ranking moving from 10th place in 2017 to 3rd place in 2019.

### **ICMR laid Guidelines on Gene Therapy**

The Indian Council on Medical Research has issued guidelines on Gene Therapy to enable the stakeholders to comply with the R&D of Gene Therapeutic Products being produced and tested inside the country. Framed on scientific and ethical considerations, the guidelines explain the responsibilities of investigators, sponsors, and institutions. It also covers considerations like quality assurance, manufacturing, and control, etc. The guidelines give clear instructions for clinical trials. It speaks about principles regarding the signing of international collaboration and procurement of Genetic Therapeutic Products (GTP) that deliver nucleic acid by various means for therapeutic benefit to patients. The therapies are mainly used to treat rare diseases and India has around 70 million patients suffering from rare diseases.

### **Sridhar Patra : The New CMD of NALCO**

The Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appointed Sridhar Patra as the new chairman-cum-managing director (CMD) of one of the largest integrated Bauxite-Alumina-Aluminium- Power Complex in India, National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO). He will be on the post till the date of his superannuation, i.e. on 31st October 2024 or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Currently, he is serving in the capacity of the Director (Finance) in NALCO.



### **Smriti Mandhana is in news**

India's opener Smriti Mandhana has been named in both the International Cricket Council's ODI and T20 teams of the year, capping off a memorable season. She has Jhulan Goswami, Poonam Yadav and Shikha Pandey for the company in the ODI team of the year and all-rounder Deepti Sharma in the T20 side. So far she has played 51 ODIs and 66 T20Is for the country, besides a couple of Test matches and has a combined tally of 3476 runs in T20Is and ODIs.

### **The demise of Shreeram Lagoo**

92-year old Veteran actor Shreeram Lagoo died of age-related ailments in Pune on 17th December 2019. The deceased played an important role in the growth of the theatre movement in Maharashtra in the post-Independence era. He gained popularity via Marathi plays like "Natsamrat" and "Himalayachi Saoli", and Marathi film like "Pinjra" as well as Hindi films like "Ek Din Achanak", "Gharonda" and "Lawaris" etc. Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar has paid his tribute to all-time great artist Shreeram Lagoo.

### **ITBP launched a matrimonial site for its staff**

In December 2019, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) introduced a dedicated matrimonial site for its staff. With this first of its kind move, the border guarding paramilitary force of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) became the first one to do so among Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). This website will be managed by ITBP and only the staff will be able to access it. As conveyed by the Home Ministry, there are about 2.5 lakh bachelors in all the CAPFs that have a combined strength of about 10 lakh personnel, while ITBP has 25,000 bachelors and 1,000 spinsters in its various ranks at present. The portal has been developed for unmarried, widowed and separated personnel of both genders in combat and other ranks to help them find a suitable soulmate within their service

### **Gujarat : The 7th Recipient Of President Colours**

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu conferred 'President's Colours' upon the Gujarat police at a ceremony held in Karai Police Academy in Gandhi Nagar on 15 December 2019. With this, Gujarat became the seventh state to receive the prestigious President's Colours or an emblem 'Nishaan'. All police officers of Gujarat will wear this emblem on the left-hand sleeve of their uniform. In addition to this, a specially designed flag was also bestowed to the police of this state. On this occasion, a new logo of the Gujarat Police was also unveiled. They received this honor in recognition of their tireless, longstanding and meritorious service, gallantry and dedication to the nation. The recipients are well equipped with modern technology, skills, and training to improve their efficiency in maintaining law and order and peace. The Gujarat Police is the 8th largest police force in the country.

## **Steeling India-2019**

The Confederation of Indian Industry organized the “Steeling India 2019” conference on 16th December 2019, which is meant to increase metal intensity in key sectors like automobile, infrastructure, railway, water, irrigation, and housing. It aimed at the promotion of steel-intensive structures and the augmentation of steel consumption. Steel producers, consumers and policy advisors attended the conference. The conference framed a road map and brought in strategies to mitigate supply chain issues in the steel sector. It paved the way for India’s target of 300 MT of production by 2030 (according to National Steel Policy). According to the World Steel Association prediction, steel demand in India is likely to reach 103 MT (Million Tonnes) this year.

## **Parliament passes Recycling of Ships Bill; Lok Sabha clears the Arms (Amendment) Bill**

On Monday, the Parliament passed the Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019, with the Rajya Sabha’s approval. The bill restricts the use of hazardous materials on ships and defines ship recycling as dismantling it at a facility to recover the components and materials for reuse and taking care of the so-produced hazardous material. On the other hand, the Lok Sabha passed the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019 on the same day. This bill seeks to reduce the number of licensed arms per person and to increase the quantum of penalties for violation of the law. It is worth noting that the menace caused by celebratory firing will also be punishable now.

## **Death penalty for rapists: Andhra Pradesh cabinet clears bill**

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet clears the Bill Proposing Death Penalty For Rapists. The Bill mandates that from the day of an FIR being filed, the entire trial should not take more than 21 days. The “Andhra Pradesh Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2019”, will now be called “Andhra Pradesh Disha Act, 2019”. The A.P. Cabinet also gave its nod for the introduction of the Special Courts for Specified Offences against Women and Children Bill, 2019, for dealing with offences including rape and gang-rape, acid attacks, stalking, voyeurism, sexual harassment and cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Once the Bill is passed by the State Assembly, Andhra Pradesh will be the first state in India to have capital punishment for rape cases.

## **The Sixth Indian Ocean Dialogue**

External Affairs Ministry will be hosting the 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue and Delhi Dialogue XI at the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra in New Delhi on the 13th and 14th of December 2019. The Indian Ocean Dialogue will take place on 13th December on the “Indo-Pacific: Re-imagining the Indian Ocean through an Expanded Geography” theme. While the Delhi Dialogue XI will begin on Friday evening on the “Advancing Partnership in Indo-Pacific” theme. According to the Ministry, the themes will build on the growing recognition of the Indo-Pacific concept in strategic and academic circles within the region and beyond.

## **The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019**

The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019, which won the approval of Lok Sabha on 9th December 2019, succeeded in winning Rajya Sabha's approval on 11th December 2019. 125 members supported the legislation while 105 opposed it. The bill seeks amendment in the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants of six communities viz. Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan eligible for Indian citizenship. Home Minister Amit Shah assured Muslims that it is not against the Muslims and they will continue to enjoy the rights of the citizens of the country. He also drove the fear of the people from the North-Eastern States away, assuring that the bill will not affect their interests. He further added that the legislation will fetch a new light into the lives of the people who were facing religious persecution in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.

## **'Must See Monuments' in India**

The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism, Prahlad Patel, broke a piece of information regarding the 138 'Must See Monuments' identified by the Archaeological Survey of India. This information is accessible on the 'Must See' portal of ASI. It features outstanding Indian monuments and archaeological sites, under the protection of ASI, which includes those that feature on the World Heritage List of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The listed areas present a unique testimony to civilization in the past, as they showcase exceptionality in terms of arts and architecture, planning and design and exemplary engineering skills.

## **Maharashtra has the highest employable talent**

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Association of Indian University (AIU) together released an 'India Skills Report 2019'. It is about the employability of citizens in the country across the states. Maharashtra topped the list with the highest employable talent followed by Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh in the second and third places respectively. The report also ranked the cities based on the availability of employment of which Mumbai, Hyderabad and Pune emerged as the most employable cities in the country. And profession-wise MBA holders replaced engineers at the top slot with an employability score of 54% this year. The MBA category was followed by pharmacy, commerce and arts candidates at second, third and fourth places respectively.

## **National Energy Conservation Week**

Several government enterprises and public sector undertakings are all set to celebrate National Energy Conservation Week from Energy Conservation Day, 14th December to 20th December 2019. Numerous energy conservation message-oriented activities are in queue. The Energy Conservation

Day is celebrated annually since 1991. It is an initiative of Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to demonstrate achievements of government in saving energy and conservation. On this day, the Petroleum Conservation Research Association creates public awareness in saving fossil fuels. Besides this, National Energy Conservation awards are distributed to industries that exhibit key role in conserving energy.

### **ISRO is in action**

The Indian Space Research Organization is ready to launch ‘Duchifat 3’, a satellite constructed by three youngsters Alon Abramovich, Meitav Assulin and Shmuel Aviv Levi from Sha’ar HaNegev High school of Israel on PSLV C48 from Sriharikota on 11th December 2019. With a dimension of 10x10x30 cm and 2.3 kg in weight, the remote sensing and photo satellite is meant for ecological research of Earth regarding air pollution, water source pollution, forest monitoring, and helping agriculturists from space. Along with this, ISRO will also introduce India’s RISAT-2BR1, that is a spy satellite to strengthen Indian military’s Earth surveillance. It will also launch other foreign satellites viz. Italy’s search and rescue Tyvak-0092, Japan’s QPS-SAR – a radar imaging earth observation satellite and USA’s multi-mission Lemur-4 satellites and earth imaging 1HOPSAT, technology demonstration Tyvak-0129, which are international customer satellites under a commercial arrangement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) under Department of Space.

### **The impressive medal tally of India at South Asian Games**

India in its South Asian Games campaign has so far earned 214 medals that includes 110 gold, 69 silver and 35 bronze in Nepal. The prominent ones came via athletics, where India clinched 49 medals viz. 23 gold, 20 silver and 6 bronze. Two gold and five silver medals came via table tennis category and so on. These South Asian games were held in different cities of Nepal namely Kathmandu, Pokhara and Janakpur. And Cricket has also been included this time after 8 years. Around 2,715 athletes participated in the event that featured Black bucks as its mascot. In India, hunting of Blackbucks is a crime under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

### **Space Technology Cells in premier institutions**

The Indian Space Research Organization announced the establishment of five Space Technology Cells at the premier institutes viz. IISc, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Bombay, IIT Madras and IIT Kanpur for research activities. The Technology cells will give space to professors and scholars associated with the institutes. So far among IITs, IIT-Roorke is carrying a joint programme on “Thin Membrane-based technology to develop parachutes for fighter aircraft” with DRDO and ISRO. The upcoming Space Technology Cells will concentrate on the development of propulsion systems’ design and optimization, rocket and satellite technology, aerodynamics and heat transfer related problems.

### **Rajya Sabha echoed with Santhali**

MP Sarojni Hembram from Odisha spoke about matters of public importance in a tribal language called Santhali and it became the first occasion when Rajya Sabha heard a tribal language during zero hour session. The MP also demanded Bharat Ratna for Pandit Raghunath Murmu, the Santhali scholar who launched Ol Chiki script for the language in year 1925. This language is prevalent in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Odisha as well as in Nepal and Bangladesh. Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution through the 92nd Constitutional Amendment act, 2003 registered the official entry of the language. Santal Tribe, classified under Scheduled Tribes is the third largest tribal group in India.

### **GST Stakeholder Feedback Diwas**

7th December 2019 was observed as GST (Goods and Services Tax) Stakeholder Feedback Diwas by the central and state authorities in response to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's direction of obtaining on-the-spot response and suggestions concerning the new system for filing GST Returns which will be introduced from the next fiscal year. The new return form will be made mandatory from 1st April 2020 across the country. Around 7,500 trade associations/stakeholders, large number of taxpayers, all prominent chambers of commerce and industry, compliance managers and tax practitioners participated in this event. They were encouraged to upload GST returns (ANX-1 and 2) and give feedback regarding ease of compliance, deficiencies, improvements and uploading.

### **Army Forces Flag Day**

Nation celebrated the annual Armed Forces Flag Day on 7th December 2019 for fund collection from people of India for the welfare of Indian Armed Forces viz. rehabilitation of battle casualties, resettlement and welfare of ex-servicemen and their families and welfare of serving personnel and their families. All the three forces of the India arranged carnivals, shows and dramas to display their roles in ensuring national security. They distributed car flags, small flags in deep blue, red and light blue colors that represent the three services to donors. This day was observed for the first time in 1949.

### **Artificial Intelligence entered CBSE curriculum**

The Ministry of Human Resource and Development has introduced the subject of Artificial Intelligence in classes VIII, IX and X in CBSE schools on 6th December 2019. Today Artificial Intelligence is blooming to execute tasks like visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translating languages by naturally imbibing into human intelligence. Further the subject is minimizing error. The CBSE has collaborated with many organizations like Microsoft, Intel, IBM to prepare the module of Artificial Intelligence and has already trained around 1000 teachers for hands-on knowledge on tools like Flipgrid, OneNote, Outlook, Minecraft, etc. They have also been imparted projects on digital story-telling, tools to create BOTs and concepts around artificial intelligence.

### **The Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant of Uttarakhand**

Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Trivendra Singh Rawat inaugurated a Sewage Treatment Plant in Haridwar district of Uttarakhand in the benign presence of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia on 5th December 2019. It is the first Sewage Treatment Plant that got completed under Hybrid Annuity (HAM) Based Public Private Partnership Model (PPPM). Unique feature of this HAM project is that the plant will also be maintained and operated for a period of 15 years by the same developer. The 14 million litres per day Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant has been constructed at expenditure of Rs.41.40 crore under Central government's Namami Gange Programme and it is based on advanced aerobic biological process, Sequential Batch Reactor (SBR) process with capacity of removing nutrients during treatment and is a 100% eco-friendly project. The plant promises the highest standards of output parameters.

### **The Fourth India Water Impact Summit**

On the theme of 'Financing of High Impact projects in the water sector', Union Minister of Jal Shakti inaugurated the fourth water impact summit in New Delhi. It was about addressing the biggest problems associated with water via integrated management of water resources in rural and urban areas. It drew attention towards study of usage of water and its impact as India holds only about 4% of global fresh water but is home to 18% of world population. In order to control the impact of human activities on water and to reduce water scarcity, the Indian government is running initiatives like Environment Flow and Urban River Management Plan, Ganga River Basin Management Plan, Jal Jeevan Mission, National Mission for Clean Ganga, etc. The summit also held the second Water Finance Forum which was meant to fetch global financial investors and institutions together.

### **Head on Generation technology now in Indian Railways**

The Indian Railways has recently introduced an environment friendly and energy efficient solution in passenger trains to tackle noise and air pollution problem. The technology changes the locomotives and coaches and makes them suitable for Head On Generation. The Railways has developed and improvised converters that can replace diesel generators. Big noise making fume emitting power generators will be replaced by silent generators. The technology draws power from overhead electric supply and minimizes noise level and reduces emission of carbon dioxide as well as diesel consumption. In India this technology was launched in the year 1996 after India signed an agreement with Germany and Germany transferred the technology to the Indian Coach Factories. Rajdhani, Samprak Kranti, Duronto, Shatabdi and Hamsafar are few trains in which the technology was first implemented.



### **The Third Edition Of National Public Procurement Conclave**

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurated the third edition of two-day National Public Procurement Conclave in New Delhi on 5th December 2019. Government e-Marketplace in association with Confederation of Indian Industry organized this event. The ongoing conclave aims at creating a road map for the future of GeM to unify all government procurement, across all Ministries and Departments. It further anticipates an actionable agenda to facilitate work contracts in the form of tenders to be made available on the GeM portal in future. GeM is a perfect example of openness, fairness and inclusiveness and is a symbol of a truly transparent e-marketplace.

### **A New Book 'The Legacy of Militancy in Punjab'**

Civil rights activist Inderjit Singh Jaijee and journalist Dona Suri released a new book titled, 'The Legacy of Militancy in Punjab' that speaks about how Punjab's militancy (from 1984 to 1994) affected judiciary by delaying trials, how the popular culture has been influenced and response of youth towards conditions in the northern state. Published by SAGE, it showcases the developments in post-militancy Punjab regarding politics, govt policies, and functioning of police and courts along with other things. It elaborates on Khalistan movement that sought to create a separate country called Khalistān for Sikh community of the country.

### **Regulations on Debt ETFs and index funds**

Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India laid norms for debt exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and index funds, as a part of the government's efforts to enhance depth in the bond market and draw retail investors to debt products. The norms are in line with the former finance minister Arun Jaitley 2018-19 budget speech and will not be applicable to debt ETFs, tracking debt indices having constituents as government securities, treasury bills and tri-party repo. According to the norms, Index created for debt ETF should have a minimum of eight companies. Any single issuer can have maximum 15% weight in the index. All the constituents of the index are required to possess investment grade as well as a defined credit rating and defined maturity among other regulations.

### **DAC's approval for procurement of weapons**

Recently Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh agreed on the procurement of weapons and equipment worth Rs. 22,800 crore. Among the weapons and equipments, comes Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) India aircraft, Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR) Anti-Submarine Warfare P8I aircraft, Twin Engine Heavy Helicopters (TEHH) and Thermal imaging night sights for assault rifles. Some of these will be developed in India to strengthen and promote 'Make in India' initiative.

### **‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’ Conference**

Minister of State (MoS) for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurated a two-day Regional Conference on ‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’ to address ‘Jal Shakti and Disaster Management’ in Jammu. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in association with Governments of Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir were the organizers of this event. The conference became witness of technical sessions on Water Warriors Discussion, Rejuvenation of Rivers- Cauvery and Jhelum, Reducing Water Consumption in Agriculture, disaster management like Urban Flooding, Management of Floods, Forecasting & Early Warning, Emergency Responses and NDRF (National Disaster Response Force ) Rescue Operations-2014 Srinagar Floods and 2015 Chennai Floods along with the release of the Special issue of e-Magazine ‘Minimum Government Maximum Governance’. It also initiated the integration of Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS ) Portal of Government of India and Awaaz-e-Awam Portal of Jammu & Kashmir.

### **The Ongoing Pension Week**

Labour Ministry is celebrating Pension Week from 30th Nov 2019 to 6th Dec 2019 to increase 1 crore enrolments under Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM) & 50 lakh under National Pension Scheme for traders and self-employees (NPS-Traders) by March 2020. PM-SYM is the scheme is for unorganized workers like street vendors, mid-day meal workers, head loaders, brick kiln workers, cobblers, domestic workers, etc. with monthly income not more than Rs.15,000 in the age group of 18-40 years and they should not be a member of any organized sectors like New Pension Scheme (NPS), Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme or Employees’ Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) and he/she should be an Income Tax (IT) payer. While, the NPS-Traders scheme is meant for old age protection and social security of retail traders/ shopkeepers and self-employed persons whose annual turnover is not more than Rs. 1.5 crore.

### **Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi won the trust vote**

On 30th November 2019, Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi won the trust vote in Maharashtra Assembly. Ashok Chavan of Congress proposed the trust vote while NCP's Nawab Malik and Shiv Sena's Sunil Prabhu seconded it. In this session a total of 169 MLAs voted in favour of the confidence motion while four members abstained which included two from the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, one from CPI(M) and a member of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena. As 105 BJP MLAs were absent on the occasion so zero votes were cast against the motion. In context to walkout of BJP,

former Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis expressed dissatisfaction regarding the appointment of NCP leader Dilip Walse Patil as pro-tem Speaker and condemned the Assembly session as illegal and unconstitutional. He also underlined violation of the Constitution as ‘Vande Mataram’ was not played to signal the start of proceedings and stated that the oath-taking ceremony of Uddhav Thackeray and his six ministers was also not as per the rules.

### **Short films on environment were applauded**

The Ministry of Environment distributed awards for a short film competition on environment on 1st December 2019. Additional Secretary in the Environment Ministry, Ravi Agrawal bestowed the awards to various school students and professionals for their documentaries and films in a ceremony in New Delhi. Member of Parliament Suresh Prabhu, who chaired the Jury comprising film directors Ramesh Sippy, Rahul Rawail and Manju Borah, selected the final awardees selected the final awardees from 90 nominated films out of 345 received entries.

### **DHFL became the first financial services firm to be taken to NCLT**

On November 30, 2019, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) referred Dewan Housing Finance Corp. Ltd (DHFL) to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for insolvency proceedings and with this, it has become the first financial services player to go NCLT for a possible debt resolution. DHFL has recorded a debt of Rs.83,873 crore. As per the statutory inspection of DHFL conducted by the National Housing Bank, the DHFL revealed a serious deterioration in its finances. The firm recorded public deposits of Rs.6,188 crore as on 6 July 2019, down from Rs.10,166.72 crore as on 31 March 2018.



### **Obituary of World's Oldest Female Black Rhino**

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority of Tanzania broke the sad news of the demise of World's Oldest Female Black Rhino, named 'Fausta' at the age of 57. As per the authority, "Records show that Fausta lived longer than any rhino in the world and survived in the Ngorongoro, free-ranging, for more than 54 years before it was kept in a sanctuary for the last three years of its life in 2016." The deceased rhino was first time located in the Ngorongoro crater in 1965 by a scientist from the University of Dar es Salaam when she was just three or four years old. It has been observed that in the wild, rhinos typically live till 37 to 43 years old, or up to 50 years in captivity.

### **The 19th Joint commission meeting of India & Iran**

External Affairs Minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India and his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif of Iran co-chaired the 19th Joint Commission Meeting 2019 in Tehran, Iran. The duo are looking forward to celebrate the 70th anniversary of bilateral treaty of friendship in 2020 and will promote exchanges between the Parliamentarians, organize cultural festivals, promote people-to-people contact and youth exchanges. Besides this, both agreed to speed up the work on the strategic Chabahar project of India, Iran and Afghanistan which was signed in May 2016. It is said to be a gateway to trade opportunities with these three countries of Central Asian Nations.

### **UNGA's latest resolution**

The UN General Assembly approved a resolution censuring human rights abuses against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims and other minorities on 27th December 2019. The 193-member world body voted 134-9 in favor of the resolution, invoking Myanmar's government to take urgent measures to fight incitement of hatred against the Rohingya and other minorities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states. The problem persists with the Buddhist-majority of Myanmar that has long considered the Rohingya to be Bengalis from Bangladesh even though their families have lived in the country for generations. They have been denied citizenship, freedom of movement and other basic rights since 1982, which led them stateless.

### **Amendment of India-Swiss Air Service Pact**

In order to provide commercial opportunities to carriers of India and Switzerland, tune the air service with developments in the civil aviation sector and create a conducive environment for enhanced as

well as seamless connectivity, the Union Cabinet presided by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the signing of Protocol to amend the Agreement between Swiss Federal Council and Government of India. The protocol will increase the number of Operational Airlines between the two nations. Currently, there are only two airlines between the duo. According to the recommended amendment, the 'designated airlines' of each country will be free to decide reasonable tariffs without resorting to anti-competitive and predatory behavior. In addition to this, the designated airline(s) will be able to use aircraft leased from other company or airline(s)

### **Samajwadi Party Nepal waved goodbye to Oli Government**

In Nepal, the Samajwadi Party Nepal has left Oli government as the government failed to comply with the two-point agreement with this party. Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli rejected Chairman of the Party's Central Committee and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Law, Upendra Yadav's constitution amendment proposal during a recent Cabinet meeting. Past reveals that Yadav had joined Oli government in June 2018 after an agreement on the constitution amendment regarding unaddressed issues related to citizenship. At that time, Prime Minister Oli had assured him that the constitution will be amended keeping in view people's aspirations and the country's interest. However now, when Oli showed that promises are meant to be broken, resignations of Upendra Yadav along with Minister for Urban Development Mohamed Istiyak Rai chose to come on the table.

### **The decade witnessed its last solar eclipse**

The new moon passed between the Sun and the Earth, appearing to cover part (a partial eclipse) or all (a total eclipse) as viewed from different points of the Earth's surface. The solar eclipse began at 9:23 p.m. on December 25th as a partial solar eclipse, then reached its first "ring of fire" at 10:34 p.m. which was visible in Saudi Arabia. The moon passed in front of the sun, that did not completely cover the Sun's face. Instead, it left a brilliant ring, or annulus, rendering a "ring of fire" effect. This was the last solar eclipse of 2019, indeed, of the decade. The 88-mile (142 km) visibility path of "ring of fire" then moved across Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, India, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Singapore, Borneo, the Philippines and the U.S. territory of Guam.

### **Russia, the owner of hypersonic weapons**

In December 2019, while unveiling a zircon missile during a meeting of senior military officials in Moscow, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin highlighted the fact that Russia is the only country in the world that has hypersonic weapons. The mentioned missile can fly from land to land 10 times faster than the speed of sound; has a range of over 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) and is capable of carrying a nuclear or conventional warhead. This the first time Russia has taken such a lead in designing and constructing a new type of missile which will soon be a part of the army. Besides this,

the country owns an 'Avangard' missile which is a hypersonic glide vehicle that can deliver both nuclear and conventional payloads as well as 'Kinzhal', another hypersonic glide vehicle, which is currently serving the Russian Air Force. It is worth knowing that the United States and China are also pursuing their own hypersonic weapons as the US Air Force has roped Lockheed Martin to make missiles, while China has been testing hypersonic aircraft.

### **Iraq's parliament approved a new election law**

Iraq's parliament gave nod to the new election law to give a better chance of winning seats to political independents in parliament. The new law changed the country's 18 provinces into several electoral districts, with one legislator elected per 100,000 people. This will prevent parties from running on unified lists, which in the past have helped them easily sweep all the seats in a specific province. Under this provision, the seats will now go to whoever gets the most votes in the electoral districts. It has brought relief to hundreds of thousands of protesters who have taken to the streets in Baghdad and the predominantly Shiite south since October 1. Iraq's 329-member parliament was elected in May 2018.

### **Pakistan celebrated its victory over Sri Lanka**

23rd December 2019 became auspicious for Pakistan as its cricket team registered the first victory in the Test format of the game on home ground after a decade. It scored a convincing 263-run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test in Karachi and won the series by 1-0. Pakistan posted a daunting 476-run target and wrapped the visitors at 212-7. The first Test of the series in Rawalpindi marked the return of Test cricket in Pakistan, but it had ended in a draw on the pretext of bad weather.

### **Manuel Marrero became PM of Cuba**

Ex Cuba Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero got appointed as the first Prime Minister of the country in more than four decades. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has appointed him for a five-year term. The new Prime Minister had been an architect by trade and has helped to shape Cuba's economy by making tourism as one of the growth engines for sixteen long years. Flashback reveals, the post of the prime minister was abolished in 1976 by the then-revolutionary leader and Cuba's last prime minister Fidel Castro, who took the title of president of the State Council, which replaced the posts of president and prime minister of the country in December 1976. In this way, Marrero Cruz has now become the first appointed Prime Minister of Cuba since 1976. Besides him, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and other members of the Council of Ministers were also appointed. The real power holders Diaz-Canel and Raul Castro will continue as the head of state and the first secretary of Communists respectively.



### **Eco, the new common currency**

French President Emmanuel Macron broke a piece of information during his official visit to Ivory Coast that the eight West African countries viz. Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Guinea-Bissau that currently use common currency CFA Franc have agreed to change its name 'Eco'. Among them Guinea-Bissau, are former French colonies and the CFA franc's links to former colonial ruler France. The CFA franc was initially pegged to the French franc and has been linked to euro for about twenty years. Besides this, Ivory Coast President announced the stop holding of 50% of reserves in French Treasury and withdrawal of French governance in any aspect related to the currency. Now the common currency Eco will see the daybreak of 2020.

### **Portugal announced Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize**

Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Costa has aired announcement regarding the launch of an annual Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize to perpetuate Mahatma Gandhi's ideals during the second meeting of the National Committee for Commemoration of the 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at Rashtrapati Bhavan recently. The inaugural edition of this prize will be dedicated to animal welfare as well as Mahatma Gandhi was of the opinion that the greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

### **US imposed sanctions on two Iranian Judges**

The United States of America imposed sanctions on two Iranian Judges viz. Revolutionary Court judges, Justice Abdolghassem Salavati and Justice Mohammad Moghisseh. Justice Abdolghassem Salavati had sentenced a recently freed American and had also barred more than 100 people for political reasons. While Justice Mohammad Moghisseh is said to have presided over trials of artists and over anti-regime social media postings. The sanctions declared all sorts of transactions with the two judges a crime in the United States, with any assets they may have blocked. Further, the United States has restricted visas for Iranian officials over last month's crackdown on protests that claimed over 300 lives as reported by Amnesty International.

### **Sheikh Hasina addressed the 21st National Council of ruling Awami League**

Recently the ruling Awami League President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina inaugurated a two-day National Council of the party at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka where Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had given his popular 7th March address in 1971 and where over 90 thousand troops of Pakistan army surrendered before the Indian Army and Mukti Bahini, the liberation forces of Bangladesh after being defeated on December 16, 1971. Sheikh Hasina promised to erect a hunger and poverty-free Sonar Bangla as dreamt by Rahman. Thousands of Awami League workers from across the country participated in the National Council of the party, which is the highest decision making body of the party which elects the office bearers of the Awami League.

### **Trump launched the new US military service**

US President Donald Trump officially launched the US military 'Space Force' at an army base near Washington for the world's newest war-fighting domain. This Space Force comprised 16,000 Air Force and civilian personnel in the United States' first new military service in more than 70 years since Air Force was spun off from US Army in 1947, which will help to deter aggression and control the ultimate high ground. It is not meant to put combat troops in space but will be the provider of forces for the protection of US assets like hundreds of satellites used for communication and surveillance. It will build on the work of US Space Command (SpaceCom), which was created in August 2019 as the overseer of the US military's space operations. It will be administered by Secretary of the Air Force.

### **Pope Francis abolished "pontifical secret" used in clergy sex abuse cases**

In December 2019 on the occasion of Pope Francis' 83rd birthday, the Pope has abolished the pontifical secret used in clergy sexual abuse cases, after mounting criticism. The Church previously dealt with sexual abuse cases in secrecy, to protect the privacy of victims and reputations of the accused. But now to improve transparency and the ability of the police and other civil legal authorities to request information from the Church, the rule of the pontifical secret has been dissolved. The Vatican officials will still treat the information in abuse cases with security, integrity, and confidentiality while complying with civil laws and assisting civil judicial authorities in investigating such cases. Besides this, the Pope has also changed the Vatican's definition of child pornography, increasing the age of the subject from 14 or under to 18 or under.

### **Ethiopia launched its first satellite**

December 2019 brought Ethiopia in Space as the African country succeeded in launching its first Ethiopian Remote Sensing Satellite (ETRSS-1) from a space station in China. This satellite is expected to provide a fuller picture of the country's agriculture, forestry and mining resources and improve responses to flooding and other disasters. This was a landmark achievement for the country's space program that caps a banner year for the African space industry. This was the eighth launch of an African satellite this year, which topped the earlier record of seven in 2017. This launch makes Ethiopia the eleventh African country to send a satellite into space, while Egypt was the first in 1998.

### **The Sixth India-Maldives Joint Commission Meeting**

Minister of External Affairs (MEA) Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid co-chaired the 6th Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Maldives in New Delhi which took place after a gap of four years in December 2019. The two countries inked agreements regarding Cooperation between the election commissions of India and Maldives, Cooperation between their Financial Intelligence Units(FIU) and Instrument of Ratification (also MoU) for the treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters of India and Maldives.

### **18th December : World Arabic Language Day**

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) observed the annual World Arabic Language Day on December 18, 2019 on the “Arabic Language and Artificial Intelligence (AI)” theme. The permanent delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Foundation celebrated this event at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. The day has been observed since 2012 to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity of the Arabic language. On this date in 1973 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) had adopted Arabic as the 6th official language of the organisation.

### **Commission of China's first indigenously aircraft carrier.**

China has deployed its first indigenously built aircraft carrier “Shandong” in December 2019. Named after the Shandong province, from Sanya, a key establishment in the South China Sea, it is a second aircraft carrier of China after Liaoning. ‘Shandong’ is bigger than ‘Liaoning’, which can carry 36 combat aircraft. Both are conventionally powered ships with ski jump-assisted short take-off-barrier-arrested-recovery (STOBAR) launch systems. As far as India is concerned, it has an aircraft carrier named ‘INS Vikramaditya’ in operation. Its second aircraft carrier ‘INS Vikrant’ is under construction in Kochi (Kerala), which is expected to get into service in 2022.

### **Indian peacekeepers got rewarded with UN Medal**

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) acknowledged around 850 Indian peacekeepers with the prestigious UN medal for their outstanding contribution to building peace in conflict-affected South Sudan. Presently 2,342 Indian troops and 25 police personnel are deployed with the UN Mission in South Sudan out of which 323 of them are engineers and medical staff. India is among the largest troops contributing countries to UN peacekeeping operations, that is serving the local communities beyond their duties.

### **Conclusion of the Global Refugee Forum**

The two-day first edition of the Global Refugee Forum concluded on 18th December 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. Hosted by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Government of Switzerland, the forum focused on arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing, solutions, energy and infrastructure, protection capacity, jobs and livelihoods, and education. It was meant to translate international solidarity into concrete action via encouraging the exchange of good practices at national, regional or global levels. The forum was convened at the ministerial level in which UN member states, private businesses, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations (including Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)), high-level delegations from co-host Switzerland and from co-convening countries like Germany, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Turkey, and Pakistan as well as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres were the participants.

### **‘Suiso frontier’: World’s first liquid hydrogen transport ship**

In December 2019, a Japanese public multinational corporation, Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd introduced the world’s very first ocean-going liquid hydrogen carrier ship, ‘Suiso Frontier’ at a ceremony at Kobe Works yard, Japan. The 116 m long, 19 m wide, 4.5 m deep ship is meant to carry liquid hydrogen at minus 253°C produced in the south coast of Australia to unload in Kobe, Japan. It has gross tonnage 8,000 t. propulsion via Diesel engine electric power generation, and voyage speed of 13 knots. it will get completed by late 2020.

### **Pakistani Cricketer Abid Ali scripted news headlines**

On 15th December 2019, 32-year-old Pakistani cricket player Abid Ali scored a hundred in his maiden Test appearance against Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi stadium in Pakistan, while he also completed a unique double, with his ton on ODI debut in March 2019 against Australia. With this, he became the first and the only male player in cricket history to score hundreds on both test and ODI debut. England’s woman cricketer Enid Bakewell has also achieved the feat in the past. She had played 12 Tests and 23 ODI matches between 1968 and 1979, was the first cricketer to start both ODI and Test career with a century.

### **Donald Trump is facing Senate’s blaze**

The House of Representatives accused President Donald Trump of obstruction of Congress and abuse of power on 18th December 2019. With this, he has become the third president in history to be charged with committing high crimes and misdemeanors and face removal by the Senate. All but two Democrats supported the article on abuse of power, which charged Trump of corruptly using the levers of government to seek election assistance from Ukraine in the form of investigations to discredit his Democratic political rivals. Republicans were united in opposition. It passed this article with 230-197 votes. On the second charge, obstruction of Congress, a third Democrat joined Republicans in opposition and the vote was 229-198. These votes have set the stage for a historic trial beginning early next year which will decide on whether to acquit the 45th president or convict and remove him from office.

### **Pervez Musharraf is in for capital punishment**

18th December 2019 became a black-letter day for Pakistan's former dictator Pervez Musharraf. He has been sentenced to death by a three-member bench of a special court, headed by the Peshawar High Court Chief Justice Waqar Ahmad Seth in a case of treason for overthrowing the Constitution. However, his legal team can appeal the verdict of Special court in the Supreme Court. And in case if the top court upholds the special court's verdict, then he'll seek the mercy of President of Pakistan, Arif Alvi, who possesses the constitutional authority under Article 45 to pardon a death row defendant.

It is the first occasion in Pakistan's history that a military chief has been declared guilty of high treason. Musharraf snatched power by ousting the then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a 1999 bloodless coup. He was Pakistan's President from 2001 to 2008 and has been sentenced for suspending the Constitution and imposing an extra-constitutional emergency in the year 2007.

### **Toni-Ann Singh became Miss world 2019**

December 2019 became auspicious for the 23-year old Toni-Ann Singh of Jamaica, who got crowned as Miss World 2019 by Miss World 2018-Vanessa Ponce of Mexico at the 69th Miss World competition 2019 held at the ExCeL London international center in London, United Kingdom(UK). Toni-Ann is the 4th Jamaican to win this most coveted title. Miss France, Ophely Mezino and Miss India 2019, Suman Ratan Singh Rao turned out as the first and second runners up respectively in the contest. India's 21 years old Suman Rao (Rajasthan) became Miss World Asia.

### **International Tea Day**

The world observed the annual International Tea Day on December 16, 2019. Tea producing countries like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, and Malaysia have been observing this day since 2005. The day was meant to draw global attention of governments and citizens towards the effect of global tea trade on workers and growers as well as to make a request for price supports and fair trade. In this context, it is worth knowing that as May is the quality tea manufacturing season in most tea producing countries so, in October 2015, Indian government moved a proposal at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Tea expanding the observance of International Tea Day through UN FAO in the month of May. And the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has now accepted India's proposal and designated May 21st as International Tea Day.

### **China has set its eyes on Bougainville**

Recently China has begun to extend its political and economic presence in the new country Bougainville, which is a chain of islands that achieved independence via a referendum of independence from Papua Guinea. The peace agreement that was signed to end the nine-year conflict or the civil war regarding employment and land acquisition on the island by copper mines (owned by Papua Guinea, Australia, and other foreign countries) reached its end and so need of this referendum was felt. China's support to the island is drawing Pacific islands against Taiwan. Recently Taiwan lost two of its Pacific allies. Australia, UK, and US are viewing this move of China as its attempt of bringing Bougainville into its debt-trap diplomacy. China seems to be interested in Bougainville's rich fisheries, copper, gold and other resources.

## **World Design Protopolis**

During India's largest design conclave, Kochi Design Week (KDW) at Bolgatty Island in Kerala, the World Design Organization (WDO) announced its plan of introducing a new five-year global program "World Design Protopolis" in Bengaluru, Karnataka. It is meant to implement holistic progress in megacities worldwide and thus making them sustainable. The project will measure the progress of the city, attract investments and solve problems so that the city becomes a better place for citizens. It has selected Bengaluru as the first-ever city on the globe to implement this project, which is exclusively meant for megacities.

## **USMCA trade deal signed by US, Mexico & Canada**

Canada's deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, Mexico's chief negotiator, the deputy foreign minister, Jesus Seade and the US trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, signed a fresh overhaul of a quarter-century-old trade pact after months of negotiations. The pact was signed at the presidential palace in Mexico City on December 10th 2019. The final approval is now awaited from the countries' legislatures. Amongst others were Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, at the event. It is worth noticing that the accord is meant to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a deal that was in place since 1994.

## **Two articles of impeachment, accusing Trump of 'high crimes and misdemeanors', unveiled**

On Tuesday, the House of Democratic Leaders called for President Trump's removal from office, contending that he "ignored and injured the interests of the nation" in two articles of impeachment charging Trump "with committing high crimes and misdemeanors." The first article revealed by the committee chief Jerry Nadler accuses Trump of abuse of power and the second accuses him of obstructing Congress. Democrats are expected to move swiftly to hold a committee and floor vote before the holiday break. If one or more of the articles pass, the Senate would then hold a trial to consider removing Trump.

## **Abiy Ahmed: The 2019 Nobel Peace Prize Winner**

December 10th, 2019 became a red-letter day for the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, as he became the "Nobel Peace Laureate" for the year 2019 for his outstanding efforts in achieving international peace and cooperation at Oslo's City Hall, Norway. It is worth recalling here that July 9, 2018, spelled an end of a 20-year-old stalemate which was due to the 1998-2000 border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Prior to this, a historic meeting was held between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki in Eritrea's capital Asmara in which this decision was taken. This was the 100th Nobel Peace Prize, which consisted of a diploma, a gold medal and a cheque for nine million Swedish kronor (850,000 euros).



### **Abu Dhabi: World's Leading Sports Tourism Destination**

In the 26th edition of the World Travel Awards (WTA), Abu Dhabi was selected as the World's Leading Sports Tourism Destination for the seventh consecutive time in Muscat, Oman. The year 2019 fetched many prestigious accolades to Abu Dhabi, including being selected as Best City Break at the UK's Selling Travel Agents' Choice Awards and West Asia's Leading Business Tourism Destination at the West Asia edition of WTA. Its selection for the seventh consecutive time shows its level of development and promotion of sport - facilities and events. In early 2019, the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi did a 5-year partnership with Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) for hosting annual premier fixtures under Abu Dhabi Showdown Week. It has been a premium destination for sports tourism as it hosted some of the world's top sporting events viz. FIFA Club World Cup 2017 and 2018, the first edition of UAE Tour, the UFC 242 showdown, the Special Olympics World Games 2019, the AFC Asian Cup 2019, and the Brazil vs South Korea international friendly match and many more.

### **Cheers For World's First Electronic Flight**

On 10th December 2019, the first fully electronic flight in the world completed its test flight from Vancouver, Canada to the nearby islands. The zero-emission electronic flight proved that all-electric commercial aviation is possible. Designed by the company Harbor Air, the employed electrical aircraft was a 6-seater seaplane that was retrofitted with an electric motor. This first flight lasted for 15 minutes. India is also running several campaigns to promote and incentivize the use of electric vehicles.

### **The Beginning of Russia-Ukraine ceasefire round**

In December 2019, during the Paris summit, Germany and France succeeded in persuading Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to restore peace by implementing a cease-fire. Flashback reveals that, in 2014, Russia took possession of the Crimea peninsula of Ukraine with the help of pro-Russian separatists. Located in the north of the Black Sea, Crimea Peninsula is important in access to the Black Sea. Following this, Russia conducted several military actions as well as seized three Ukrainian ships here in 2018. Now after this agreement on a ceasefire round, the duo will exchange prisoners and by the end of March 2020, the conflicting countries decided to disengage military forces in the other three additional regions of Ukraine. They have also settled the issue of Russian gas exports through the Ukraine border.

### **The Third 2+2 Dialogue Between India & Australia**

Defense Secretary Ajay Kumar and Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale of India and their counterparts Australian Defense Secretary Greg Moriarty and Foreign Secretary Frances Adamson carried out the

third 2+2 dialogue on behalf of India & Australia. They discussed at length issues related to bilateral defense engagements, areas towards enhancing cooperation in the field of the defense industry and defense technology as well as prevailing regional security concerns. Prior to this, a maiden India-Japan 2+2 ministerial dialogue was also held in New Delhi. Further India is looking forward to holding a ministerial-level 2+2 dialogue with the US in Washington on 18th December 2019.

### **United States brought the curtain down on WTO appeal court**

The Appeal Court of the World Trade Organization that acts as a trade dispute settlement body for the members has been shut down by the United States on December 9, 2019. The United States of America has completely blocked the seven-member body that was scraped down to a 3-member body in 2018. This has been done on the pretext of excessive long time duration in settlement of conflicts; the majority of registered disputes were found to have been resolved outside the WTO. Now without the WTO's appellate body, the dispute settlement will go back to the pre-1995 GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) status quo.

### **Wozniacki announced her retirement**

On 6th December 2019, former World No.1 Tennis Player, Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark announced her retirement at the age of 29. The upcoming Australian Open, the first Grand Slam tournament of the year 2019 and WTA (Women's Tennis Association) event in Auckland will be her last tournament. Flashback reveals that beginning from the age of 15 in the year 2005, she succeeded in achieving the top WTA rankings for 71 weeks that made her the world's best player in October 2010. In her career she clinched 30 WTA titles including the 2017 Tour Finals in Singapore and finished 11 straight seasons in the world top 20. The outgoing champion is currently at 37th rank.

### **Demise of Ron Leibman**

Ron Leibman, winner of Tony Award (1993) for performance in the Broadway's Angels in America & an Emmy Award (1979) on the short-lived CBS show Kaz, died of pneumonia at the age of 82 on 7th December 2019. The deceased was best known for his role of Dr. Leonard Green, the father of Jennifer Aniston's Rachel Green, on TV's Friends. In his 60 year long career he appeared in a variety of dramas and comic roles and became recipient of Drama Desk Awards for his role in 'We Bombed in New Haven' & 'Transfers' between 1969 and 1970.

### **The Diwali-Power of One Awardees**

Four noted diplomats have been felicitated with the 'Diwali – Power of One' awards in New York, United States for their exemplary contribution at the United Nations (UN), for a secure and peaceful

world. Kairat Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan, Former Foreign Minister and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to UN); Nicholas Emiliou (Cyprus, former Permanent Representative of Cyprus to UN); Frantisek Ruzicka (Slovakia, Former Chef de Cabinet to President of 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the UN) and Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the UN) are the felicitated ones. Instituted in the year 2017, the Diwali-Power of One Awards are also known as ‘Oscars of Diplomacy’.

### **Sanna Marin : World's Youngest-Serving Prime Minister**

In December 2019, the 34-year-old Sanna Marin of Social Democratic Party of Finland became the country's youngest prime minister ever after resignation of outgoing leader Antti Rinne. Sanna has earlier served as Transport Minister of Finland. Sanna's party has emerged as the largest in a five-member governing coalition. With this new designation, she is now ahead in terms of Ukraine's Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk, who is at present 35 years old. In India, Rajiv Gandhi was the youngest person to become Prime Minister at the age of 40 years.

### **‘Climate Emergency’: Oxford's Word of the Year 2019**

‘Climate Emergency’ emerged as the 2019 Word of the Year in Oxford Dictionaries. It was selected among ‘climate denial,’ ‘climate action,’ ‘eco-anxiety,’ ‘flight shame’ and ‘extinction’ and was a real preoccupation of the English-speaking world in year 2019. According to the database, Oxford Corpus, that contains hundreds of millions of words of written English, the use of the term ‘Climate Emergency’ increased by a 100 times as much since 2018. Further, it was the most common compound involving ‘emergency,’ occurring 3 times as often as the next most-common word, ‘health emergency.’ Word of the Year reflects ethos or mood or preoccupations of passing year as well as its lasting potential as a term of cultural importance.

### **India-Sweden agreements**

In December 2019, India and Sweden inked a Polar Science Cooperation Agreement that seeks cooperation among India as well as the countries located in both Arctic and Antarctic regions and hence the name of the agreement is Polar Science. The agreement will help India to learn about resource exploration in the polar region, maintain the pace, strengthen its defence forces and get access to Russian bases in the Arctic. Besides this, India and Sweden joined hands to erect a healthcare innovation centre in AIIMS Delhi and AIIMS Jodhpur, for research in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and help scale-up Indian start-ups in the sector. The year 2019 is Sweden-India Year of Health marking 10 years of India-Sweden cooperation in healthcare. In 2018, the bilateral trade between India and Sweden was of 3.37 billion USD.

### **Saudi Aramco announced its biggest ever IPO**

On 6th December 2019, Saudi Arabia's oil company, Aramco announced a share price that will value the company's initial public offering (IPO) at 25.6 billion dollar, making it the largest ever IPO of the company. The proposed IPO has 3 billion shares, or 1.5% of the company, offered for 8.00 to 8.53 Dollar per share. The Saudi's state-owned crude oil company did so as part of the Arab nation's plan of diversifying its economy away from its dependence on oil as well as increase the country's sovereign wealth fund for investment in other projects also. It is worth registering here that Aramco's IPO has topped a record-breaking 25 billion dollar IPO in 2014 from Chinese internet giant Alibaba.

### **International Civil Aviation Day**

Globe did annual observation of International Civil Aviation Day on 7th December 2019 on “75 years of connecting the world” theme to generate and reinforce worldwide awareness about the significance of international civil aviation in social and economic development. The day underlines the unique role of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in helping member states to cooperate and realize a truly global rapid transit network at the service of all mankind. On 7th December 1944, participants from 54 nations had signed Convention on International Civil Aviation, ‘Chicago Convention’ in Chicago, US. Since then, the international agreement has paved the way for peaceful development of the global civil aviation system benefitting all nations across the world.

### **The 70th anniversary of NATO**

The leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met on 3rd December 2019 in London to mark the 70th anniversary of the organization. The summit was on “NATO Engages: Innovating the Alliance” theme. They discussed a number of measures like improvements to the readiness of Allied forces, recognizing space as an operational domain as well as updating NATO's action plan against terrorism. In addition to this, they also did a strategic discussion on Russia, the future of arms control, as well as the challenges coming from the rise of China. It is worth knowing that this has been the fifth consecutive year of rising defence investment as European Allies and Canada will spend \$130 billion extra by the end of 2020, with that the figure will rise to \$400 billion by the end of 2024.

### **Global Migration Film Festival organised in Dhaka**

The Global Migration Film Festival (GMFF) which started on 28th November 2019 will continue upto 18th December 2019 across the globe to draw attention to the issues of internal migration, forced migration and climate change-related migration to make people conversant on the issue of migration. In Bangladesh this festival was organised by the International Organisation of Migrants (IOM) and

Dhaka University Film Society with the support of the European Union. Films like ‘Gifts from Babylon’, ‘Just another memory’, ‘Dying for Europe’ and ‘The power of passport’ etc were screened among other films to depict the suffering and dilemma of the migrants in various parts of the world. The GMFF was celebrated for the first time in 2016.

### **The 48th National Day of UAE**

The United Arab Emirates celebrated its 48th National Day under the patronage of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi. The celebration was focussed on a spectacular theatrical production titled "Legacy of Our Ancestors" that featured a vivid journey of the UAE's heritage via a series of stories that highlighted values of courage, determination, generosity, and tolerance, which have been long embedded in the UAE's national and social fabric and that have been passed down to generations. More than 5,000 experts from 70 nations shaped this production.

### **UN Climate Change Conference**

Spain is hosting a two-week long International Climate Conference in Madrid that began on 2nd December and will continue upto 13th December 2019. United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about the global warming issue. The rising temperature that includes extreme weather conditions is creating dramatic consequences for humans and other species. 29,000 delegates from 200 different nations will attend the key events viz. the 25th Session of the Conference of the Parties, as well as the 15th meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol along the sidelines of this conference.

### **Pacific Air Chiefs' Symposium 2019**

The United States Of America is hosting Pacific Air Chiefs' Symposium 2019 at the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii on ‘A Collaborative Approach to Regional Security’ theme. It is meant to strengthen existing cooperation between Air Forces of participating countries and make way for enhanced interaction in future. The Chief of Indian Air Force (IAF) Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria is representing India in this event. Air Chiefs from across the Indo-Pacific region from 20 countries are providing perspectives on common challenges as well as on shared mutual interests with equal focus on relevant issues like Domain Awareness, Regional Security, Multi-Domain Awareness, Interoperability and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).

### **Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare**

30th November 2019 was observed as the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare under the resolution (OPCW C-20/DEC.10) as a tribute to the victims of chemical warfare and it aimed to reaffirm its commitment to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to terminate the threat of chemical weapons. In year 2013, the Nobel Peace Prize was presented to the OPCW “for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”. This day was celebrated for the first time in 2005. Chemical Weapons were used on a large scale during World War I that led to over 100,000 fatalities.

### **Sundar Pichai: The New CEO of Alphabet**

Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin announced the decision of their retirement from the leadership roles in the parent company Alphabet and promotion of Google CEO Indian-American Sundar Pichai as the next CEO of Alphabet. With this, Sundar Pichai will become one of the most powerful corporate leaders of the world. Page and Brin applauded the leadership role played by Pichai ever since he was made Google CEO. They said that the Indian-American brings humility and a deep passion for technology to the users, partners, and employees every day.

### **Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act**

US Congress approved the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act that proposes that America redirect resources to address the mass internment of over 10 lakh Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in China. The move has all the spark to ignite a sharp reaction from China. The bill is a significant step in countering the totalitarian Chinese government's widespread and horrific human rights abuses in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. This will lead to the mass internment of over one million Uyghurs and other predominantly ethnic Turkic Muslims, and Beijing's intimidation as well as threats against US citizens and legal permanent residents on American land. The bill seeks reports from various US government bodies regarding China's treatment of the Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim Turkic ethnic group.

### **Saudi Arabia : The First Arab nation to become the G20 President**

Saudi Arabia took the presidency of G20 nations from Japan on 1st December 2019 and with this, it became the first nation in the Arab world to head the G20 group. The G20 summit for 2020 will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in November 2020 on “Realising Opportunities of the 21st Century for All” theme. It will be dedicated to empowering people, safeguarding the planet, and shaping new frontiers. The Arab nation will hold numerous conferences including ministerial meetings before this slated event. G20 summit for 2019 was held in Osaka, Japan in June 2019.



## **World Computer Literacy Day**

2nd December 2019 was observed as World Computer Literacy Day across the globe to highlight and promote awareness about computers and other electronic devices. The National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) of India, which is headquartered in Gurugram observed this day for the first time in the year 2001. It was to encourage the development of computers and technological skills among women and children. The celebration aimed at imparting skills ranging from primary use to the programming level and advanced problem-solving.

## **Demise of Irving Burgie**

American musician & songwriter Irving Burgie, 'Lord Burgess' died of heart failure at the age of 95 on December 1, 2019 in Queens, US. The deceased was best known for popular Caribbean music with hit songs like Day-O (The Banana Boat Song-1952). He had composed 34 songs for singer Harry Belafonte, including 8 of the 11 songs on the Belafonte album Calypso (1956), the first album of its kind that recorded sales of one million copies. He also wrote songs for the Kingston Trio ("The Seine," "El Matador," and "The Wanderer") as well as for other groups. Island in the Sun, Jamaica Farewell and Mary's Boy Child were his other famous compositions.

## **David Warner scored triple hundred in day/night Tests**

On 1st December 2019, celebrated Australian player David Warner succeeded in posting his first-ever triple hundred in Tests against Pakistan in the second Test of the series held in Adelaide Oval, Adelaide. He completed 300 runs while smashing Mohammad Abbas for a boundary to reach his best-ever figures in just 389 balls. In this match he posted total 335 runs in 418 balls. With this, Warner became the seventh overall Australian to score a triple century in Test cricket history. He became the second Australian after the great Mark Taylor to post a triple century against Pakistan, as well as the fourth Australian as an opener to do so. He reached the landmark with 37 fours at a strike rate of 77.12. In addition to these, he also became the first-ever batsman to score 300 runs at Adelaide Oval as before him, the previous highest record was held by Don Bradman, who was 299 not out against South Africa in the year 1932.

## **The Beginning of the South Asian Games in Kathmandu**

The President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari inaugurated the South Asian Games in Kathmandu on December 1, 2019. These games will continue till upcoming 10 days in which around 487 athletes are participating from India. The South Asian Games is a biennial multi-sport event that was started in

the year 1983 and is held in the South Asian nations viz. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives. South Asia Olympic Council governs this event.

### **International Book Fair in Mexico**

1st December 2019 kick started International Book Fair in Mexico. This year India is the 'Guest of Honour Country' in this book fair and with this, it has become the first Asian country to participate as 'Guest of Honour' in the biggest book fair in the Spanish-speaking world. Minister of State for Human Resource Development Sanjay Dhotre inaugurated the India Pavilion at this event. The Minister mentioned deep literary connection between India and Mexico and recollected legendary Mexican poet Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz's first visit to India in 1952. He further said that although the two countries are in opposite directions on the world map, yet both share great similarities in terms of their people, biodiversity, family and cultural values.



### **Release of Khelo India Youth Games 2020 logo and mascots**

Sports ministry introduced logo, jersey, mascots and theme song for the third edition of Khelo India Youth Games 2020 in Guwahati, Assam at Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Indoor Stadium in Guwahati, Assam. The games will be held from January 10 to 22, 2020. In these games more than 10,000 students will be participating across 451 medal events. Besides this, the Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced the launch of a ‘Grassroot Olympic – Mission Talent Hunt’ to identify the sports talent in the state and groom them.

### **Leander Paes announced retirement from Tennis**

Indian tennis ace Leander Paes made an announcement that 2020 will be his last year as a professional tennis player. The 46-year old player who made his Olympic debut in the year 1992, will seek one final accomplishment at the Tokyo Olympics in the year 2020. It is worth registering here that he has made 7 consecutive appearances at the Olympics that made him the only tennis player ever to do so. The outgoing champion has booked eight doubles and ten mixed doubles Grand Slam titles on his name.

### **Conclusion of IPL Auction**

December 2019 witnessed auction of leading super stars in world of Cricket. Pat Cummins emerged as the most expensive overseas IPL player purchased by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) for a whopping 15.50 crore rupees. Some of the prominent players that were sold in the auction are Glenn Maxwell (Kings XI Punjab, 10.75 crore rupees), Chris Morris (Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), Rs 10 crore), Windies pacer Sheldon Cottrell (Kings XI Punjab, Rs 8.80 crore), Nathan Coulter Nile (Mumbai Indians, Rs 8 crores), Shimron Hetmyer (Delhi Capitals, Rs 7.75 crore), Piyush Chawla (the Chennai Super Kings (CSR), Rs 6.75 crore), Eoin Morgan (KKR, Rs 5.25 crore), Aaron Finch (RCB), 4.4 crore rupees), Australian Marcus Stoinis (Delhi Capitals, Rs 4.8 crore), Varun Chakravarty (KKR, Rs 4 crore), Robin Uthappa (Rajasthan Royals, Rs 3 crore), Jaydev Unadkat (Rajasthan Royals, Rs 3 Crore) and many more. It is worth noting that Chris Lynn was signed for base price of Rs 2 crore,

which seemed shocking considering his capabilities. Sri Lankan Isuru Udana (RCB, Rs 50 lakhs), Pravin Tamble(KKR, Rs 20 lakhs), Tajinder Dhillon (Kings XI Punjab, Rs 20 Lakhs) etc. were some of the other players who were sold in the last phase of auction, while Yusuf Pathan, Dale Steyn, Adam Zampa and Colin De Grandhomme failed to attract any bidders at the auction.

### **Demise of Basil Butcher**

December 2019 witnessed the end of 86 year old Basil Fitzherbert Butcher in Florida, United States. He was the first Amerindian to represent Guyana and West Indies (Windies) as batsman. He was born on 3 September 1933 in British Guiana and made his debut in 1958 against India. He played 44 test matches for the Windies and amassed 3104 runs with 7 centuries and 16 fifties at the age of 43. He posted 486 runs at an average of 69.42 against India, including centuries at Kolkata and Chennai. In 1970, he was named as Wisden Cricketer of the Year.

### **The Conclusion of the 13th South Asian Games**

India finished this edition of the South Asian Games on a high note with total 312 medals (174 gold, 93 silver, and 45 bronze) followed by Nepal total 206 (51 gold, 60 silver, and 95 bronze), Sri Lanka total 251 (40 gold, 83 silver, and 128 bronze), Pakistan total 131 (31 gold, 41 silver, and 59 bronze), Bangladesh total 138 (19 gold, 32 silver, and 87 bronze), Maldives total 5 (1 gold, 0 silver, and 4 bronze), Bhutan total 20 (0 gold, 7 silver, and 13 bronze) at second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh spots respectively.

### **WADA banned Russia from international sporting events.**

The World Anti-Doping Agency scripted the news by banning Russia for four years from participating in global sporting events which includes the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Moreover, the Russian flag and national anthem have also been banned in international events. Although Moscow is being charged with falsifying data from an anti-doping laboratory, yet Russian athletes will still be allowed to compete at the Tokyo Olympics as neutrals, but only if they can prove that they were not part of what WADA believes was a state-sponsored system of doping.

### **Book “Dreams of a Billion: India and the Olympic Games”**

Boria Majumdar & Nalin Mehta co-authored a book titled “Dreams of a Billion: India and the Olympic Games”. The book speaks about India’s journey in the global sports arena of Olympics and presents

the record of all the wins, the misses, the star sportspersons, their stories, and the challenges and possibilities that lie ahead of India to make its mark in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The book gives an insight into how India has fared at the Olympics over the past century and how the Indian Olympics world has changed in the last ten years. HarperCollins India will publish this book in January 2020 in India.

### **India in the 13th South Asian Games 2019**

Indian women's football team started its South Asian Games 2019 campaign by defeating the Maldives by 5-0 at the Pokhara Stadium in Nepal. Besides this, Indian athletes are dominating in track and field events. Sarvesh Anil Kumar scripted new South Asian Games record in men's high jump by crossing 2.21 meter height. The previous record of 2.20 meter was in name of Srilanka's M Wijesekara in 2004. Archana Suseendran in women's 100 metre, M. Jashna in women's high jump and Ajay Kumar Saroj in men's 1500 metres won a gold each to begin India's athletics campaign on an impressive note. In Volleyball, Indian men's and women's team won gold. Men's team defeated Pakistan 3-1. Indian women's volleyball team defeated host Nepal by 3-2 in the final. In Shooting, in the women's 10 metres air rifle event, Mehuli Ghosh won the gold. India also won the team gold in the 10 metres air rifle event. In Table Tennis, Indian men's and women's teams claimed gold medals defeating Nepal and Sri Lanka in the finals.

### **Release of Khelo India Youth Games 2020 logo and mascots**

Sports ministry introduced logo, jersey, mascots and theme song for the third edition of Khelo India Youth Games 2020 in Guwahati, Assam at Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Indoor Stadium in Guwahati, Assam. The games will be held from January 10 to 22, 2020. In these games more than 10,000 students will be participating across 451 medal events. Besides this, the Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced the launch of a 'Grassroot Olympic – Mission Talent Hunt' to identify the sports talent in the state and groom them.



1. Which of the following governments approved formation of integrated safety scheme to deal with natural calamities in November 2019 ?  
 (a) Andhra Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Bihar  
 (d) Goa (e) Delhi
2. In November 2019, the 12th Urban Mobility India Conference and Expo 2019 was held in.....  
 (a) Pune (b) Varanasi (c) Lucknow  
 (d) Mumbai (e) Hyderabad
3. Which of the following banks launched account mobilization campaign 'Current Account Savings Account (CASA) campaign' in November 2019?  
 (a) Allahabad Bank (b) Karnataka Bank (c) Bank of Baroda  
 (d) Bank of India (e) Bank of Maharashtra
4. Which edition of National Naturopathy day was observed on 18th November 2019?  
 (a) 1<sup>st</sup> (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> (c) 3<sup>rd</sup>  
 (d) 4<sup>th</sup> (e) 5<sup>th</sup>
5. India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit 2019 took place in .....  
 (a) India (b) Singapore (c) Philippines  
 (d) Thailand (e) Malaysia
6. Who is the author of the book "From Shanties to School" that got released in November 2019?  
 (a) Devdutt Pattanaik (b) Kavita Kane  
 (c) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (d) Manimala Roy (e) Gita Mehta
7. National integration day was observed on November 19, 2019 to mark the birth anniversary of.....  
 (a) Indira Gandhi (b) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel  
 (c) Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose (d) Rani Laxmi Bai (e) Rajiv Gandhi



8. Which of the following states topped in Swachh Survekshan Gramin 2019 awards?  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Gujarat (c) Tamil Nadu  
(d) Bihar (e) Uttar Pradesh
9. Which among the following won 'the 2019 Golden Peacock Award for Sustainability' ?  
(a) NHPC Limited (b) NTPC  
(c) JSW Energy Limited (d) Power Grid Corporation India Limited  
(e) Tata Power Company Limited
10. National Epilepsy Day was observed on..... November.  
(a) 15<sup>th</sup> (b) 16<sup>th</sup> (c) 17<sup>th</sup>  
(d) 18<sup>th</sup> (e) 19<sup>th</sup>
11. In November 2019, which of the following general insurance companies signed agreement with Fino payments bank to offer sachet based insurance products ?  
(a) Apollo Munich Insurance (b) ICICI Lombard (c) New India Assurance  
(d) United India Insurance (e) The Oriental Insurance
12. According to November 2019 report, the earnings from internet ticketing services of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) registered .....increase in profits.  
(a) 14% (b) 15% (c) 16%  
(d) 17% (e) 18%
13. In November 2019, Lieutenant Shivangi of ..... became the first woman pilot of Indian Navy to join Naval operations.  
(a) Rajasthan (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Uttar Pradesh  
(d) Bihar (e) Maharashtra
14. In December 2019 government approved a semi-high speed rail project named "Silver line" for which of the following states?  
(a) Karnataka (b) Tamil Nadu (c) Telangana  
(d) Kerala (e) Andhra Pradesh
15. In November 2019, government approved how many plastic parks across the country to eliminate all single-use plastic in the country by 2022 ?  
(a) 5 (b) 6 (c) 7  
(d) 8 (e) 9

16. Rajat Bhargava got appointed to head panel on.....  
(a) GST (b) Aviation  
(c) Petrochemical investment (d) Tourism investments (e) Employment
- .
17. Which of the following governments launched new Land Policy 2019 ?  
(a) Gujarat (b) Uttar Pradesh (c) Rajasthan  
(d) Andhra Pradesh (e) Assam
- .
18. Which of the following states celebrated Sangai Festival 2019 ?  
(a) Gujarat (b) Uttar Pradesh (c) Rajasthan  
(d) Manipur (e) Assam
- .
19. Which of the following countries topped the 7th 2019 Global Terrorism Index ?  
(a) Pakistan (b) Iraq (c) Syria  
(d) Afghanistan (e) Somalia
20. Which of the following became Oxford Dictionary's word of the year 2019 ?  
(a) "Climate action" (b) "Climate denial" (c) "Climate emergency"  
(d) "Extinction" (e) "Flight shame"

## • ANSWERS •

- 1.(b) **Uttarakhand** government approved formation of integrated safety scheme under the high-intensity earthquake minimization program to deal with natural calamities in November 2019. A budget of Rs 500 crore has been sanctioned for a period of 5 years for the same.
- 2.(c) In November 2019, the 12th Urban Mobility India Conference and Expo 2019 was held in **Lucknow** on “Accessible and livable Cities” theme to disseminate information to the cities and to help them keep up-to-date with best urban transport practices
- 3.(b) **Karnataka Bank** launched account mobilization campaign ‘Current Account Savings Account (CASA) campaign’ in November 2019 which will remain in force till February 29, 2020. The aim of this campaign is to open 4.18 lakhs Current & Savings accounts by active involvement of its 8000 plus work force in all the 846 branches across India
- 4.(b) The **2nd** edition of National Naturopathy day was observed by the Ministry of AYUSH on 18th November 2019 to promote the drugless medicine to prevent diseases, which are caused by changing the lifestyle. This Ministry was earlier known as the Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) that was established in March 1995.
- 5.(c) India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit 2019 took place in Davao, **Philippines** to focus on innovative technologies, exhibitions, and pave the way for industry-academia-government partnerships.
- 6.(d) Educationist **Manimala Roy** penned “From Shanties to School” that explores 1991 economic reforms on literacy especially among the migrant laborers of Delhi and their children. The book speaks about the slums of Delhi and its outskirts as the area of research.
- 7.(a) National integration day also known as Quami Ekta Divas was observed on November 19, 2019 to mark the birth anniversary of **Indira Gandhi**. Besides this, The Qaumi Ekta Week (National Integration Week) 2019 was also celebrated from 19th -25th November on “Secularism, Anti-Communalism and Non-Violence” theme
- 8.(c) **Tamil Nadu** topped in Swachh Survekshan Gramin 2019 awards followed by Haryana and Gujarat. While Peddapalli district (Telangana) topped the district list for these awards followed by Faridabad (Haryana) and Rewari (Haryana). Uttar Pradesh was adjudged as the State with Maximum Citizen Participation. Cement Manufacturers Association (CMA), Hindustan

Unilever Limited and AMUL (Anand Milk Union Limited) were felicitated for their great contribution under the Swachhta Hi Seva campaign-2019 towards effective plastic waste management

- 9.(b) National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) won ‘the 2019 Golden Peacock Award for Sustainability’ during the 19th International Conference on Corporate Governance & Sustainability held in London, United Kingdom. It made efforts in providing cleaner and green energy, in-order to minimize environmental impact.
- 10.(c) National Epilepsy Day was observed on **17th** November to create awareness about epilepsy, its causes, and treatment. Epilepsy is a disease in which the brain produces sudden abnormal bursts of electrical energy that even affect other brain functions and lead to recurrent unprovoked seizures. This day was instituted by Dr. Nirmal Surya in the year 2009
- 11.(b) In November 2019, **ICICI Lombard** signed agreement with Fino payments bank to offer sachet based insurance products like Hospicash which provides customers the solution to cover loss of their income. This product is meant to benefit migrant workers, when they are hospitalized
- 12.(a) According to November 2019 report, the earnings from internet ticketing services of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) registered **14%** increase in profits. The revenue from the online ticketing segment witnessed a jump of just over 80 per cent to Rs 199 crore in the April-September period as against Rs 110 crore in the corresponding period of FY18-19
- 13.(d) In November 2019, Lieutenant Shivangi of Muzaffarpur, **Bihar** became the first woman pilot of Indian Navy to join Naval operations. She joined the naval operations on completion of operational training at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi, Kerala on December 2, 2019. She is now authorized to fly dornier aircraft
- 14.(d) In December 2019 government approved a 532 km Thiruvananthapuram – Kasaragod semi-high speed rail project named “Silver line” for **Kerala** worth Rs 56,443 crore. This corridor will cover 11 districts in 14 of Kerala excluding Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Palakkad and Wayanad. Trains on track will run at 200 km per hour
- 15.(b) In November 2019, government approved **6** plastic parks in Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu with 50% funding by centre & another 50% funded by State Government beneficiary industries to eliminate all single-use plastic in the country by 2022

- 16.(c)** Andhra Pradesh bureaucrat Rajat Bhargava got appointed to head panel on **Petrochemical investment**. This is the first time when the centre has decided to amend the Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Regions (PCPIR) policy after it was introduced. So far the centre has approved 4 PCPIR which are at Dahej (Gujarat), Visakhapatnam-Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh), Paradeep (Odisha) and Cuddalore- Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu)
- 17.(e)** **Assam** launched new Land Policy 2019 to remove the difficulties regarding the land allotments and settlements. It has been prepared by Revenue and Disaster Management Department after 30 years
- 18.(d)** **Manipur** celebrated Sangai Festival 2019. Every year in November, Gateway of North-East region, Manipur celebrates this festival which was named after the State animal, Sangai, the brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur
- 19.(d)** With 7,379 reported killings due to terror attacks in 2018, **Afghanistan** has topped the 7th “2019 Global Terrorism Index: Measuring the impact of terrorism” prepared by Sydney (Australia) based Institute for Economics and Peace(IEP). Its Taliban terrorist group has been ranked first as the deadliest terror groups. It is followed by Iraq(2nd), Nigeria(3rd), Syria (4th), Pakistan(5th) and Somalia(6th). India got 7th rank in this index.
- 20.(c)** “**Climate emergency**” became Oxford Dictionary’s word of the year 2019. This word was most widely used in year 2018. Climate emergency is defined as “a situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and also to avoid the possible irreversible environmental loss resulting from it”.