

Weekly Current Affairs

06 – 12 December, 2020

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NATIONAL NEWS

1. Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat inaugurates Suryadhar Lake

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on 29 November inaugurated the Suryadhar lake at Doiwala near here, saying it will address the drinking water and irrigational needs of nearly 20 villages around it and is also set to become a major tourist and water sports destination in coming times.
- Besides fulfilling the drinking water and irrigational needs of 18-20 villages, the lake will recharge the water resources in the area and help build a healthy eco-system that will attract migratory birds, Rawat said at the function to mark the inauguration of the ambitious project.

2. CS Chetan B Sanghi chaired the first meeting to review the preparations about COVID-19 vaccine in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- The Chief Secretary, Chetan B Sanghi chaired the first meeting of the State Steering Committee to review the preparations about COVID-19 vaccine in the A&N Islands. The committee was apprised of the cold chain preparedness, operational planning and human resource mobilization for the anticipated launch of the vaccine.
- Directorate of Health Services has listed out various Cold Chain Handling Points & Health Care Institutions for vaccine administration sessions as per SOPs. The administration has requested the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to include workers of Andaman Aadi Janjati Vikas Samiti under Tribal Welfare Department in the first phase of proposed vaccine inoculation. The Ministry assured that the issue would be taken up with the National Expert Group for Vaccine Administration.

3. Commerce Ministry and AYUSH Ministry decide to set up an AYUSH Export Promotion Council

- Ministries of Commerce and Industry and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports. This decision was taken on Friday in a joint review of AYUSH trade and industry by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik.
- It was also decided that the entire AYUSH sector will work together to achieve price and quality competitiveness to boost exports. The review was held through video conference. It was attended by nearly 50 industry and trade leaders from the AYUSH Sector. More than 2000 stake-holders of the AYUSH Sector also attended the e-event through live streaming on virtual platform

4. India to host virtual summits with Bangladesh, Vietnam in December to boost diplomatic ties

- December promised to be another busy month for Indian diplomacy with at least two prime ministerial level summits with Bangladesh and Vietnam expected to take place.
- Also in the works is a visit by Nepalese foreign minister Pradeep Gyawali.
- Kicking off the busy season on Sunday was Indian army chief Manoj Mukund Naravane who embarked on a four day trip to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in rare visit to countries in the Gulf region.

5. PM Modi to give inaugural address at virtual IMC 2020 on 8 December

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will give the inaugural address at the virtual India Mobile Congress 2020 on 8 December. IMC 2020 is being organised by the Department of Telecommunications, and the Cellular Operators Association of India. It will be held from 8 December to 10th December.
- The theme for IMC 2020 is "Inclusive Innovation - Smart, Secure, Sustainable". It aims to align to the Prime Minister's vision to promote 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', 'Digital Inclusivity', and 'Sustainable development, entrepreneurship and innovation'. It also aims to drive foreign and local investments, encourage Research and Development in the telecom and emerging technology sectors.

6. India and Qatar to create special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by QIA into India

- India and Qatar decided to create a special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by Qatar Investment Authority into India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi while speaking on telephone with Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of Qatar also resolved to explore Qatari investments in the entire energy value-chain in India.
- Both the leaders discussed the robust cooperation between both countries in the fields of investment flows and energy security, and reviewed recent positive developments in this regard. The leaders agreed to remain in regular touch, and looked forward to meeting in-person after the normalisation of the public-health situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. India in top 10 performers on climate change index

- India remains in the top 10 for the second year in a row in the latest global Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) released in Germany on Monday.

- The biggest current emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) China figures at 33rd rank while the largest historical polluter, the USA, appears at the bottom of the list.

8. Cabinet approves setting up of public WiFi networks under 'PM-WANI'

- In a bid to improve wireless connectivity, the Union Cabinet approved setting up of public WiFi networks across the country.
- The WiFi will be provided through public data offices (PDOs) for which there will be no licence, registration or any other fees.
- The public WiFi was being rolled out as part of the Prime Minister WiFi Access Network Interface (PM- WANI).
- This will boost incomes as well as ensure the youth gets seamless internet connectivity.
- It will also strengthen the Digital India mission.

9. Cabinet Approves Rs 23,810 crore for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana to Boost Employment

- The Union Cabinet on 9December,2020 gave a nod for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in the formal sector and incentivise creation of new employment opportunities during the COVID-19 recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0, said Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.
- The Cabinet has approved an expenditure of Rs.1,584 crore for the current financial year and Rs.22,810 crores for the entire scheme period from 2020 to 2023.
- The scheme will provide subsidy for two years in respect of new employees engaged on or after October 1,2020 and upto June 30, 2021, Prasad said in a press briefing here.
- The government will pay both 12 percent employees' contribution and 12 per cent employers' contribution.

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11. Odisha tourism launches its flagship Eco-Retreat program at 5 locations

- Odisha Tourism launched its flagship Eco-Retreat program at 5 locations in the State. The event, inaugurated by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik through virtual mode, aims at boosting tourism in the State.
- The five locations, namely Konark, Satakosia, Bhitarkanika, Daringibadi and Hirakud under the scheme are open to the tourists till February next year. Under the programme, accommodation facilities and services will be provided to tourists in luxury cottages in the identified locations.

12. Ladakh LG virtually inaugurates second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival 2020

- Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh today. The three Day festival will host a series of talks, importance of the region, ancient knowledge of Ladakh, Folk music, cultural Dance, geology and wildlife of Himalayas and several interesting topics on YouTube and Facebook streaming.
- Lieutenant Governor appealed to the students to participate in the Literature Festival. He said that the knowledge of the different worlds will bring a new perspective which is useful for the local youth to develop a sense of cultural rootedness and identity.

13. India and Nepal decide to open flights under bilateral bubble arrangement

- India and Nepal have decided to open flights under a bilateral bubble arrangement, as India has done with several countries.
- India had proposed this to Nepal some time back and Nepal has cleared it now after Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla highlighted the importance of people to people connectivity during recent visit.

14. PM to address global climate summit to mark 5th anniversary of Paris Climate Pact

- Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar has said that climate change is not an overnight phenomenon and it has taken the last 100 years to have an impact on the environment.

- Briefing the media in New Delhi on the eve of completion of five years of the Paris Agreement, Mr Javadekar said, climate change is not a result of recent actions but of historical actions. He said, historically the USA has 25 per cent of all emissions, Europe has 22 per cent whereas China has 13 per cent and India only 3 per cent

15. Govt rejects claim of fully privatizing Indian Railways & abolishing facilities like monthly passes, discounts to senior citizens

- Government has rejected a claim that Indian Railways will be fully privatized and facilities like monthly passes and discounts to senior citizens will be abolished.
- Press Information Bureau of the Government of India said that a video circulating on social media is fake. No such decision has been taken by the central government.

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New Batch from 17th Dec. 2020

16. PM Modi and President of Uzbekistan held bilateral virtual summit

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a virtual summit. This was the first bilateral Virtual Summit between India and a Central Asian country. The leaders discussed the entire spectrum of bilateral relationship, including strengthening of India-Uzbekistan cooperation in the post-COVID world.
- In his opening remarks, Mr Modi said, India and Uzbekistan are two rich civilizations and both have been in constant contact since ancient times. He said, there is a lot of similarity in the understanding and approach of both countries to the challenges and opportunities of the region. Mr Modi said, the relationship between India and Uzbekistan has been very strong

INTERNATIONAL NEWS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. EU President and British Prime Minister agree to resume Brexit trade talks

- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen instructed their negotiators to resume trade talks in a last ditch attempt to bridge significant differences. In a joint statement, the two leaders recognised the seriousness of their differences and said that a further effort should be undertaken by the negotiating teams to assess whether they can be resolved.
- British and EU negotiators paused trade talks to call in their leaders to try to narrow the gaps and get an agreement after a week of negotiations failed to bridge significant divergences between the two sides.

2. Biden officially secures majority of Electoral College votes with California certification

- US President-elect Joe Biden has formally secured a majority of Electoral College votes with California certified his victory in the state.
- California appointed 55 electors pledged to vote for Democrat Joe Biden, officially handing him the Electoral College majority needed to win the White House.
- Secretary of State Alex Padilla's formal approval of Biden's win in the state brought his tally of pledged electors so far to 279, which is just over the 270 threshold for victory.

3. Pfizer seeks emergency use authorisation for its COVID-19 vaccine in India

- Pfizer, one of the world's premier biopharmaceutical companies, has sought emergency use authorisation for its COVID-19 vaccine in India. The firm, in its application submitted to the drug regulator, has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country.
- Pfizer India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) an emergency use authorisation for its COVID-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.

4. China Becomes 2nd Country to Unfurl Its Flag on Moon, as Chang'e-5 Probe Takes Off For Earth

- China has become the second country to plant its national flag on the moon's surface. Before China's Chang'e-5 probe took off from the moon to return to earth, a Chinese national flag unfurled from the lander-ascender combination.
- The Chinese spacecraft carrying the country's first lunar samples has started its return journey from the moon, according to the country's space authority.
- Chang'e-5 probe, comprising an orbiter, a lander, an ascender, and a returner, was launched on November 24, and its lander-ascender

combination touched down on the north of the Mons Rumker in Oceanus Procellarum, also known as the Ocean of Storms, on the near side of the moon on December 1.

5. Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute, named as 'Asian of the Year'

- Adar Poonawalla, the chief executive of the world's largest vaccine manufacturer Serum Institute of India, is among six people named "Asians of the Year" by Singapore's leading daily, The Straits Times for their work in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) has collaborated with the University of Oxford and the British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca for making the COVID-19 vaccine, "Covidshield", and is conducting trials in India

6. US Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad holds talks with Taliban leader

- The US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad held a meeting with Taliban's deputy leader Mullah Baradar and chief negotiator Abdul Hakim on Saturday.
- As per reports, they discussed the future US-Taliban peace process and release of the remaining prisoners.
- Notably, the first meeting of the Leadership Committee of the Afghanistan High Council for National Reconciliation was held in Qatar on Saturday.
- The United States has welcomed the formation and the first Leadership Committee meeting of the Afghanistan High Council for National Reconciliation.

7. In Hongkong , Authorities freeze bank accounts of former pro-democracy lawmaker Ted Hui Chi-fung

- In Hong Kong, authorities freezed bank accounts of former pro-democracy lawmaker Ted Hui Chi-fung after he fled to Britain with his family.
- Briefing a news agency via social media the pro democracy activist said that bank accounts belonging to him, his wife and his parents at Bank of China Hong Kong, HSBC and Hang Seng Bank were frozen.
- Reports said , conditions have worsened in Hong Kong after China imposed security legislation in June, making anything Beijing regards as subversion, secession, terrorism or colluding with foreign forces punishable by up to life in prison.

8. Indonesia receives first COVID vaccine from China's Sinovac from 6 December,2020

- Indonesia received its first shipment of coronavirus vaccine from China on 6 December, 2020, President Joko Widodo said, as the government prepares a mass inoculation programme.
- Jokowi, as the president is widely known, said in an online briefing that the Southeast Asian country received 1.2 million doses from China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd., a vaccine Indonesia has been testing since August.
- He added that the government plans to receive another 1.8 million doses in early January.
- Indonesia is also expected this month to receive shipments of raw materials to produce 15 million doses and materials for 30 million doses next month, the president said.

9. Army Chief General M M Naravane to visit UAE and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from tomorrow

- Army Chief General M M Naravane, will visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia starting tomorrow.
- The visit is historic in the sense that it will be the first time an Indian Army Chief is visiting the UAE and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- General Naravane is visiting the UAE from 9th to 10th of this month. He is scheduled to call on senior military officials where he will discuss avenues for enhancing India-UAE defence relations.
- The Army Chief will then travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the second leg of his tour from 13th of this month. The Army Chief will visit the Headquarters of Royal Saudi Land Force, the Joint Force Command Headquarters and King Abdulaziz War College.

10. Singapore to host World Economic Forum in May 2021

- Singapore will host the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting next May, which will see top political, business and academic leaders gather to discuss pressing global issues.
- "The Special Annual Meeting 2021 will be a place for leaders from business, government and civil society to meet in person for the first time since the start of the global pandemic. Public-private cooperation is needed more than ever to rebuild trust and address the fault lines that emerged in 2020."

11. Mt Everest declared 86 cm taller by Nepal and China

- Nepal and China on 8December,2020 jointly announced that the revised height of the world's highest peak Mount Everest was 8,848.86 metres, about 86 centimetres more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954.

- The Nepal government decided to measure the exact height of the mountain amid debates that there might have been a change in it due to various reasons, including the devastating earthquake of 2015.

12. US President-elect Joe Biden vows 100 million COVID vaccinations in first 100 days of his administration

- US President-elect Joe Biden has set a goal of 100 million Covid vaccinations in his first 100 days in office. Attending a press conference in Delaware Mr Biden said, he can't promise that his first 100 days would end the Covid-19 but the course of the disease will be changed and life in America will also be changed for the better.
- The President-elect introduced his health team during the press conference. Mr Biden gave few details of how the largest vaccination programme in US history would be carried out. He said that getting children back to school would also be a priority for him.

13. Kuwait's Emir reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as Prime Minister

- Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as prime minister on Tuesday following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state, which faces its worst economic crisis in decades.
- Sheikh Sabah, who had been foreign minister since 2011 before being elevated to the post of premier in late 2019, faces the urgent task of overcoming legislative gridlock on a debt law that would allow Kuwait to tap international debt markets in order to plug a growing budget deficit.

14. PM Boris Johnson says 'Strong possibility' of no trade deal with EU due to Brexit

- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that there is a strong possibility the UK will fail to strike a post-Brexit trade deal with the EU.
- Speaking for the first time since a crunch meeting in Brussels, the Prime Minister said now is the time "for firms and people to prepare for a no deal outcome. Talks continue between the two sides, but Mr Johnson said they were not yet there at all in securing a deal.
- Time is running out to reach an agreement before the UK stops following EU trade rules on 31 December.

15. WHO applauds India's 'Fitness Ka Dose Aadha Ghanta Roz' campaign

- The clarion call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to all Indians of Fitness Ka Dose, Aadha Ghanta Roz has received praise from the World Health Organisation.

- In a tweet, WHO said, it applauds India's initiative on promoting physical activity through this fitness campaign. The campaign launched as part of the nation-wide Fit India Movement by Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju has gained the support of celebrities from different fields including Bollywood, sportspersons, writers, doctors and fitness influences. They have enthusiastically urged Indians to follow the basic mantra of 30 minutes of fitness every day.

New Appointments and Person in News

1. Joe Biden to nominate Indian-American Neera Tanden as chief of budget team


- U.S. President-elect Joe Biden intends to nominate Indian-American Neera Tanden as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, a top position inside the White House responsible for managing the administration's budget, according to local media reports on Sunday.
- If confirmed by the United States Senate, Ms. Tanden (50) would be the first woman of colour to head the influential Office of Management and Budget at the White House. Ms. Tanden is currently chief executive of the left-leaning Center for American Progress.

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2. IAS officer Varsha Joshi named Chairperson of NDDB

- The Government of India on Monday appointed Varsha Joshi as the new Chairperson of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). She Replaces Dilip Rath on completion of his tenure on November 30.
- Joshi is the Joint Secretary (CDD), Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India.

3. Retired IAS officer Utpal Kumar Singh appointed Secretary-General of Lok Sabha

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla appointed Utpal Kumar Singh as Secretary-General of the Lower House of Parliament. Singh has also been appointed

to the Lok Sabha Secretariat in the rank and status of Cabinet Secretary with effect from December 1.

- Utpal Kumar Singh is a retired IAS officer from the 1986 batch with 34 years of administrative experience.
- He is replacing Snehlata Shrivastava as Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha. A former IAS officer from the Madhya Pradesh Cadre, Shrivastava was appointed to the top post on December 1, 2017. Shrivastava was the first woman Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha.

4. Sandeep Kataria becomes first Indian to be appointed as global CEO of Bata Shoes

- Footwear major Bata Shoe Organization on 30 November, 2020 announced the appointment of Sandeep Kataria as the company's Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately.
- With this, Kataria becomes the first Indian to be elevated to the global role of the Bata. He takes over from Alexis Nasard, who is stepping down after almost five years in the role.
- Kataria was previously the CEO of Bata India. With 24 years of experience at Unilever, Yum Brands and Vodafone in India and Europe before joining Bata India as CEO in 2017

5. Joe Biden & Kamala Harris jointly named Time magazine's Person of the Year

- U.S. President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were jointly named Time magazine's 2020 Person of the Year yesterday.
- The Democratic former vice president and his running mate, a California senator whose election broke gender and racial barriers, together offered restoration and renewal in a single ticket, Time said in a profile of the pair, published online with its announcement.

6. Sonu Sood tops 50 Asian Celebrities in The World list

- Indian actor Sonu Sood has been named the number one South Asian celebrity in the world for his philanthropic efforts during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic this year, in a first-of-its-kind ranking released in London on Wednesday.
- The 47-year-old Bollywood star beat off tough global competition to top the '50 Asian Celebrities in The World' list.

BANKING

1. India signs \$133 million loan agreement with ADB for Meghalaya's power distribution sector

- The government signed a \$133 million loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to strengthen the power distribution sector in Meghalaya.
- The loan will be supplemented by a \$2 million grant from the ADB's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction to finance renewable energy projects and for supporting income generation activities for women and other disadvantaged groups, said a finance ministry statement.
- The loan will be used to modernise Meghalaya's power distribution network and improve the quality of power supplied to households, industries, and businesses, the statement said.
- The agreement was signed by CS Mohapatra, additional secretary, department of economic affairs and Takeo Konishi, country director of ADB's India Resident Mission.

2. Axis Bank launches 'Axis Bank Rupifi Business Credit Card' for MSMEs

- Axis Bank Ltd in partnership with Rupifi and Visa launched 'Axis Bank Rupifi Business Credit Card' for MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises).
- This Contactless Co-Branded credit card, powered by Visa is applicable only to the MSMEs businesses that transact on the aggregator platforms partnered with Rupifi PAN (Permanent Account Number) India for their business purchases.
- The card offers credit solutions to such MSMEs. It is only for domestic transactions.

3. Fitch revises India's GDP forecast to -9.4% for FY21

- Fitch Ratings on Tuesday raised India's GDP forecast to -9.4 per cent in the current fiscal year to March 2021 from a previously projected contraction of 10.5 per cent after the economy staged a sharper rebound in the second quarter.
- In its Global Economic Outlook, Fitch said the coronavirus recession has inflicted severe economic scarring and the country needs to repair balance sheets and increase caution about long-term planning.

4. RBI issues draft circular on declaration of dividend by NBFCs

- Reserve Bank of India has issued draft circular on declaration of dividend by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in pursuance to the announcement made in the monetary policy.
- Accordingly, deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below six percent and a capital adequacy ratio of at least 15 percent for the last three years, including the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend.

Books and Awards

1. Invest India wins United Nations Investment Promotion Award for 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated Invest India, the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of the Central Government, for winning the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
- The award has been given by UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Prime Minister said that the award is a testimony to the government's focus on making India the world's preferred investment destination and improving ease of doing business.

2. Raj Kamal Jha wins Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for 'The City and the Sea'

- Journalist-author Raj Kamal Jha has won the 3rd Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for his novel, "The City and The Sea", organiser and publisher Peter Bundalo announced on Monday.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the winner of the \$5,000 prize was announced online in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Jha's book, which is based on the December 2012 Nirbhaya rape and murder case, was chosen from ten shortlisted books including Amitav Ghosh' "Gun Island", Nirmala Govindarajan's "Taboo", and Ranjit Hoskote's "Jonahwhale".

3. UN food agency World Food Programme to receive Nobel prize in online event

- The World Food Programme will receive its Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December, 2020, in an event very different from the traditional pomp-filled celebration in the Norwegian capital because of the coronavirus outbreak.
- This year, 12 laureates were named across the six categories. All but the Peace Prize have been awarded over the past days at low-key ceremonies across Europe and the United States in the places where the winners live.
- A Nobel prize comes with a 10-million krona (USD 1.1 million) cash award — to be shared in some cases — diplomas and gold medals. Traditionally, the lavish Nobel ceremonies are all held December 10, the anniversary of the death of prize founder Alfred Nobel, in Stockholm, except for the Peace Prize that is held in Oslo, in neighboring Norway.

SCIENCE TECH & DEFENCE

1. HAL-IISc Skill Development Centre launches its first training programme

- HAL-IISc Skill Development Centre in Challakere of Chitradurga district in Karnataka launched its first training programme today offering five courses in virtual mode.
- The programmes offered are in the niche engineering areas of aerospace, mechanical, electrical and electronic sectors, and in line with the “Make in India” mission. The experienced engineers, supervisors and faculty members of various technical institutes will be trained in the Centre. The trainees will spend more than 50 per cent of the course duration in labs, conducting experiments. Faculty members will be selected from Indian Institute of Science and other leading organisations including HAL.

2. US Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad holds talks with Taliban leader

- The US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad held a meeting with Taliban's deputy leader Mullah Baradar and chief negotiator Abdul Hakim.
- As per reports, they discussed the future US-Taliban peace process and release of the remaining prisoners.
- Notably, the first meeting of the Leadership Committee of the Afghanistan High Council for National Reconciliation was held in Qatar.
- The United States has welcomed the formation and the first Leadership Committee meeting of the Afghanistan High Council for National Reconciliation.

3. China to take decisive measures to effectively stop major accidents in coal mines

- China has ordered Chongqing provincial government to take decisive measures to effectively stop major accidents in coal mines. 23 workers in southwest China were killed after being trapped underground in a coal mine in the city of Chongqing this weekend. The miners were among the total 24 people who have been exposed to unsafe levels of carbon monoxide at the Diaoshuidong coal mine which is a high-gas mine with a capacity of 120,000 tpa of coal. One person has been rescued. The mine was suspended and shut down over two months ago. The cause of the accident is being further investigated.
- The latest incident is the region's second such accident in just two months, as reported by state news agency. At least 16 people died in late September

after high levels of carbon monoxide trapped miners at the Songzao coal mine in Chongqing. Chongqing government officials were summoned by the State Council's Work Safety Committee after two fatal accidents at coal mines in the southwestern region.

4. RTGS system to be available on 24*7 basis from December 14, 2020

- The Reserve Bank of India has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system will be made available round the clock on all days of the year with effect from 00:30 hours on December 14, 2020.
- Presently RTGS system is available for customers between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM.
- RTGS shall continue to be governed by the RTGS System Regulations, 2013.
- RTGS shall be available for customer and inter-bank transactions round the clock, except for the interval between 'end-of-day' and 'start-of-day' processes, whose timings would be duly broadcasted through the RTGS system.
- Intra-Day Liquidity (IDL) facility shall be made available to facilitate smooth operations.



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5. China successfully activates nuclear-powered 'artificial sun'

- China has successfully activated its so-called "artificial sun," a nuclear fusion reactor that could fuel its energy ambitions for years to come — if they can make it more sustainable.
- China's Atomic Energy Authority fired up its HL-2M Tokamak reactor for the first time on Friday, state-controlled media report. The brief test is being hailed as an important scientific achievement amid a global effort to develop safer, cleaner forms of nuclear energy.
- "The development of nuclear fusion energy is not only a way to solve China's strategic energy needs, but also has great significance for the future sustainable development of China's energy and national economy,

SPORTS

1. Kiren Rijiju launches 2nd edition of Fit India Cyclothon

- Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon via social media. The mega cycling event which started yesterday will run for 25 days till 31st December.
- The event will be held across the country in each district and citizens can participate by registering on Fit India website, cycle daily a distance of their choice, and share their images and videos on social media. They may tag @FitIndiaOff and use the hashtag - FitIndiaCyclothon and #NewIndiaFitIndia.

2. New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson retires from international cricket

- New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson, has announced his retirement from New Zealand cricket, as he confirmed to quit from international cricket.
- Anderson rose to fame after scoring fastest 100 in the history of One Day International cricket (ODI), in 36-ball against West Indies in January 2014.
- However this record was broken by AB de Villiers, in January 2015 who scored the fastest ODI century against the West Indies in Johannesburg in 31 balls.
- The 29-year-old, Anderson has played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs and 31 T20Is for New Zealand, scoring 2277 runs with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries and 90 wickets.
- Anderson has signed a 3-year contract with Major League Cricket (MLC) in the USA, where he will serve in the Major and Minor League Cricket and coaching ventures at the cricket academies that come under the MLC.

3. Govt to start 1000 Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country

- Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, said that the government has made various policy changes and taken up initiatives to encourage and support sportspersons and the sporting community even after they retire.
- Addressing the 10th Global Sports Summit, TURF 2020, organized by FICCI, Mr.Rijiju said, that we are also starting 1000 Khelo India small centres across the country that will help retired sports persons get employment or some role in shaping the sports culture of the country.

OBITUARIES

1. Rajya Sabha MP Abhay Bhardwaj passes away due to Covid-19

- Rajya Sabha MP from Gujarat Abhay Bhardwaj died due to Covid19 today. He was 66 and under treatment in Chennai based hospital. He was airlifted to Chennai hospital after his health deteriorated in Rajkot Civil Hospital during the month of October.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of Rajya Sabha MP Abhay Bharadwaj. In his tweet message, Prime Minister said that Abhay Bhardwaj ji was a distinguished lawyer and remained at the forefront of serving society. We have lost a bright and insightful mind, passionate about national development. Prime Minister also expressed his condolences to his family and friends.

2. Veteran Hindi writer Madhukar Gangadhar passes away

- Veteran Hindi writer Madhukar Gangadhar passed away in a hospital in the National Capital on Sunday. He was 88 years old.
- Mr. Gangadhar was born in Bihar's Purnia district on 7th January 1932. His last rites will be performed at his native place today.
- Mr. Gangadhar studied in Purnia Inter College and Patna University and had worked at Patna Akashwani and later also served as the director, AIR Allahabad.
- After serving for 39 years in All India Radio (AIR) he became an independent writer based in Delhi.
- 'Motiyo Wale Hath', 'Hirna Ki Aankhen' are some of his most well known works.

3. Popular TV actress Divya Bhatnagar passes away following Covid 19 complications

- Popular face in Indian TV Divya Bhatnagar passed away December 7, 2020 following Covid 19 complications.
- 34 year old actor, who acted in hit serials like Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata and Udaan among others, breathed her last today morning at a private hospital in Mumbai.
- Divya was admitted to hospital in last week of November following which her condition kept deteriorating.
- Many actors from the TV industry expressed shock and grief over the untimely death of the young actor.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Nation pays homage to Bharat Ratna Dr. BR Ambedkar on his 64th Mahaparinirvan Diwas on 6th Dec

- Nation pays homage to Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar on his 64th Mahaparinirvan Diwas or death anniversary .A number of functions are being organised all over the country to highlight the contribution of Dr Ambedkar in the nation building. Eminent dignitaries and Parliamentarians offered tributes to the architect of the Constitution at his statue in the Parliament House complex in New Delhi.
- President Ram Nath Kovind has paid rich tributes to Babasaheb B R Ambedkar on the occasion of his Mahaparinirvana Day

2. Armed Forces Flag Day 2020: 7 December

- Armed Forces Flag Day is celebrated on December 07, every year in India, with an objective to collect the funds from people for the betterment of the Armed Forces staff just by selling Indian flags, batches, stickers and other items. Over the years, it has become a tradition to commemorate this day as an honour to the soldiers, sailors and airmen of India.
- The three branched of the Armed Forces - the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy - organise a variety of programmes to showcase their efforts towards national security. The fund collected on Flag Day is also used for the welfare of serving personnel and ex-servicemen and also to rehabilitate battle casualties. Small flags are also distributed on this day in return for donations.

3. 9th edition of Bangalore Literature Festival to be held on December 12-13

- The ninth edition of Bangalore Literature Festival (BLF) is to be held on December 12-13. It will be a hybrid event with a small gathering at the Bangalore International Centre in Domlur while the sessions will be streamed live.
- BLF has announced the list of authors who will be part of the festival this year. The list includes marquee names like Jeffrey Archer, Chetan Bhagat and Alexander McCall Smith.

4. International Anti-Corruption Day 2020: 09 December

- Every year, December 9 is celebrated as the International Anti-Corruption Day. The day emphasises the need for the eradication of corruption and intends to create awareness on the ways through which it can be reduced.

- The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the convention against corruption on October 31, 2003. Following this, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was designated as the secretariat for the Convention's Conference of States Parties.
- In December 2005, the General Assembly designated the day as Anti-Corruption Day. The day advocates against corruption, a problem that runs rampant across the world.

5. PM Modi to inaugurate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on 9th of Jan 2021

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on 9th of next month. In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Convention will be held in virtual format. President Ram Nath Kovind will deliver the Valedictory address to the diaspora.
- The theme this year is Contributing to Atmanirbhar Bharat. The winners of 'Bharat ko Janiye' Quiz will also be announced in the Inaugural Session. The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards will also be announced to honour eminent overseas Indians for their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.

6. Human Rights Day: 10 December 2020

- Human Rights Day is celebrated on December 10 every year across the world.
- The day marks the date when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The UDHR is a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights to which everyone is entitled as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- Human Rights Day was formally established on December 4, 1950.

7. PM Modi to address International Bharati Festival 2020 on December 11, 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the International Bharati Festival, 2020 at 4:30 PM tomorrow via video conferencing.
- This year the festival is being organised in virtual mode and will see participation of several national and international poets and artists.
- The festival is being organised by Vanavil Cultural Centre to celebrate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati.

8. UNICEF Day 2020: 11 December

- UNICEF Day is observed every year on December 11. The United Nations General Assembly created UNICEF on December 11, 1946, as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. The programme was initiated to provide supplies, assistance and to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children after World War II.
- The organisation was originally named United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. However, in 1953, it became a permanent agency of the UN, and the words 'International' and 'Emergency' were dropped from the official name but the acronym continued.



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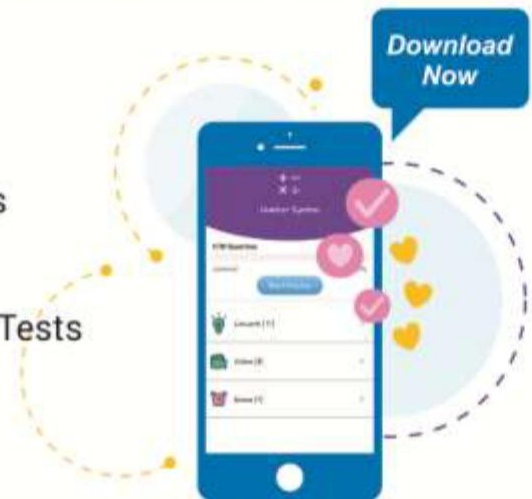
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