



WEEKLY G.K.



23 December – 29 December
2019

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National News

1. EChO Network launched to catalyze cross-disciplinary leadership in India.

- ✦ EChO Network, a national program to provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership in India with the specific focus of increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment was launched yesterday in New Delhi by Prof. K VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.
- ✦ India recently took national-level efforts to promote ecological and environmental research on the subcontinent.
- ✦ The program will train postdoctoral leaders in research and outreach on these topics incorporating current public and private efforts into a national network. International distributed institute comprising individuals housed within the industry, government, private, and academic sectors, combining their expertise and resources collectively to tackle significant scale problems.

2. Chillai-Kalan: 40-day period of extreme cold begins in Kashmir.

- ✦ The traditional 40-day period of harshest winter in Kashmir known in the local parlance as 'Chillai-Kalan' began with the upper reaches of valley receiving snowfall. Chillai-Kalan period which is known for sub-zero temperatures, frozen lakes and river, will end on 31 January 2020.
- ✦ These 40 days are when the chances of snowfall are highest and the maximum temperature drops considerably.
- ✦ During Chillai-Kalan, the weather in Kashmir valley continues to remain dry and cold with minimum temperatures hovering below freezing point and the snow during this 40-day period freezes and lasts longer.

3. Assam Cabinet nod to make Assamese the state language.

- ✦ On December 23, 2019, the Assam Cabinet nodded to make Assamese language the state language of Assam. This will exclude BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Administrative Districts), Barak Valley and Hill districts of Assam.
- ✦ The cabinet has also suggested that Assamese will be made compulsory in all schools of Assam. The move comes in the wake of rising insecurities among Assamese population in the state. After the passing of Citizenship Amendment Bill, there has been an increased wave of insecurity in the Brahmaputra Valley.
- ✦ In order make the move successful, the Central Government will now have to amend Article 345. If amended, the article will remove fears of people fighting for their rights to culture and language in the region.

Foot Notes:

About Assam

Capital: Dispur

Chief minister: Sarbananda Sonowal

4. IAF Chief RKS Bhadauria will embark a four-day visit to Egypt starting on December 24, 2019.

- ✦ The Indian Air Force Chief RKS Bhadauria will embark a four-day visit to Egypt starting on December 24, 2019. The aim of the visit is to strengthen long-standing relations between India and Egypt.
- ✦ During his visit, the chief has scheduled to visit operational and training establishments of the Egyptian Air Force. Also, he will interact with senior officials of the Egyptian armed forces.
- ✦ India is the fourth largest trading partner of Egypt following US, Italy and Saudi Arabia. The trade between the countries has been tradition. India imported 1.29 billion USD worth goods (2017-18) and exported 2.39 billion USD worth goods.

Foot Notes:**About Egypt****Capital:** Cairo**Prime Minister:** Mostafa Madbouly**Currency:** Egyptian pound**About Indian Air Force****Chief:** RKS Bhadauria**5. Oxygen Parlour opened at Nashik Railway Station to combat Air Pollution.**

- ✦ In a unique initiative to battle rising air pollution in cities, Indian Railways has opened an 'Oxygen Parlour' at Nashik railway station in Maharashtra. The initiative seeks to provide an experience of breathing clean air to the commuters. It has been set up by Indian Railways in collaboration with Airo Guard, a one of the leading consultancies in field of plant nurseries based in Nashik.
- ✦ The objective behind setting up Parlour is to expand this initiative to every railway station as well as every home.
- ✦ There are nearly 1500 plants in Oxygen Parlour, so, these plants can directly and effectively bring down the pollution in the air at the railway station and allow the people to breathe cleaner air. The concept of Oxygen Parlour is based on recommendation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Foot Notes:**About Maharashtra****Governor:** Bhagat Singh Koshyari**Chief minister:** Uddhav Thackeray**Capital:** Mumbai**6. Nityanand Rai inaugurates DNA Analysis Centre at CFSL Chandigarh.**

- ✦ Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai inaugurated a State-of-the-Art DNA Analysis Centre at CFSL, Chandigarh.
- ✦ This new Advanced Forensic DNA Analysis Lab set up under the Nirbhaya Fund scheme with an allocation of Rs.99.76 crores. The State-of-the-art facility for
- ✦ DFSS ensured that this Centre fully equipped with modern DNA Profiling tools and equipment. The Advanced Forensic DNA Analysis facility capacity of examining 2000 cases per year.

7. Cabinet approves creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff in the rank of four star General

- ✦ The Cabinet approved creation of post of Chief of the Defence Staff, CDS which was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address this year.
- ✦ The 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 to be created under Ministry of Defence and will function as its Secretary.
- ✦ The Cabinet also gave ex-post facto approval for official amendments to the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019 moved and passed by the Lok Sabha.

Foot Notes:**Chief of Army Staff:** General Bipin Rawat**8. CM of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal introduced a new policy to make Delhi the capital of Electric vehicles.**

- ✦ CM of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal introduced a new policy to make Delhi the capital of Electric vehicles. Under the policy, the government has planned to provide subsidies to electric vehicles.
- ✦ The goal of the policy is to ensure that 25% of new vehicles registered are electric by 2024. Along with electric vehicles, the government has also planned to construct 250 charging stations. It also includes 20% of the parking enabled for electric vehicles.
- ✦ The policy has been drafted after feedback from UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) experts, International Transport Council. The draft of the policy was already made public in November 2018.

Foot Notes:**About Delhi**

Lieutenant Governor of Delhi: Anil Baijal

9. PM Modi launches Atal Bhujal Yojana, names Rohtang tunnel after former Prime Minister.

- ✦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Atal Bhujal Yojana, a scheme aimed at improving groundwater management, on the occasion of 95th birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He said this scheme will help in supplying water to every house hold by 2024.
- ✦ Under Atal Bhujal scheme, the government will promote Panchayat led ground water management and behavioural change with primary focus on demand side management.
- ✦ The central government scheme stresses on the need to use technology to prevent wastage of water in various spheres, including agriculture.
- ✦ The Cabinet also approved a decision to honour the contribution of ex-PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee by naming the strategic tunnel under Rohtang Pass after him.

**10. Telangana's Kamareddy district awarded by UNICEF for effective implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission 2019.**

- ✦ United Nations International Children's and Education Fund (UNICEF) has awarded Kamareddy district of Telangana for effective implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission in water sanitation and hygiene sectors for the year 2019.
- ✦ This award was given under the categories like construction of individual sanitary lavatories, swachh darpan wall paintings, swachh survekshan, swachh sundar shouchalay and other activities.
- ✦ Satyanarayana who was Collector of Kamareddy said that this award could be possible due to the concerted efforts of district rural development organisation, district panchayat office, mandal praja parishads, panchayat secretaries, sarpanches and field assistants.

Foot Notes:**About Unicef**

Headquarters: New York, United States.

Head: Henrietta Fore

About Telangana:

Chief Minister: Chandrasekhar Rao

Governor: Tamilisai Soundararajan

Capital City: Hyderabad

11. India's first Transgender University to come up in Uttar Pradesh.

- ✦ India's first university for the transgender community will be opened in the Fazilnagar block of the Kushinagar district in Uttar Pradesh. The transgender community members will be able to get an education. The university is being built by Akhil Bhartiya Kinnar Siksha Seva Trust (All-India transgender education service trust).
- ✦ The university will facilitate its members to study right from class 1 to Post Graduate (PG) and even do research and get a Ph.D. degree. The Members of the transgender community will get an education and will be able to give a new direction to the country.

Foot Notes:**About Uttar Pradesh**

Governor: Anandiben Patel
Capital: Lucknow
Chief Minister: Yogi Adityanath

About Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 19, 2019 by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot.

Definition of a transgender person: The Bill defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth.

12. Govt of India to launch 'Digital Radio' by 2024.

- ✦ Centre government is planning to revamp 'All India Radio' officially known as 'Akashvani' by introducing Digital Radio in India by 2024, when the country will be technologically equipped for it.
- ✦ The announcement in this regard was made by Union Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Prakash Javadekar at the 2019 Akashvani Annual Awards in New Delhi.
- ✦ AIR was established in 1936 and is officially known as Akashvani since 1956. It is the national public radio broadcaster of India and is a division of Prasar Bharati, which is India's largest public broadcasting agency. AIR is sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan television Network.

13. Tamil Nadu tops 'Good Governance Index' launched by Govt of India.

- ✦ The Central Government has released the "Good Governance Index" on the occasion of Good Governance Day.
- ✦ The "Good Governance Index" was launched to assess the state of governance in Indian States and Union Territories.
- ✦ The prime objective of the GGI is to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and Union Territories, enable them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration. The Index was launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, and the Centre for Good Governance.

Foot Notes:

- Among the "Big States", Tamil Nadu topped the Good Governance Index. The poor performers are Odisha, Bihar, Goa, and Uttar Pradesh with Jharkhand finishing last in the group.
- Among the "North-East and Hill States", Himachal Pradesh topped the index, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim.
- The worst performers in this group are Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, with Arunachal Pradesh finishing last in the group.
- Among the "Union Territories", Puducherry topped the index followed by Chandigarh and Delhi. Lakshwadeep is the worst performing UT.

About Tamil Nadu

Chief Minister: Edappadi K. Palaniswami
Capital: Chennai

14. Telangana Govt Raises Retirement age of TSRTC Employees to 60 Years.

- ✦ Telangana government increased the retirement age from 58 to 60 for state-run transport corporation employees. Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao signed on the file pertaining to the increase in the retirement age for the employees of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC).
- ✦ The state cargo and parcel services will be used to shift books to institutions, medicines to ships, goods to various departments, liquor to wine shops and other goods across the state and country.
- ✦ TSRTC a profit-making corporation, implementation of the promises given to the workers and employees, strengthening the goods transportation network and other issues.

Foot Notes:**About Telangana****Founded:** 2 June 2014**Capital:** Hyderabad**Governor:** Tamilisai Soundararajan**Chief Minister:** K. Chandrashekar Rao**15. PM Modi unveiled Atal Bihari Vajpayee statue in Lucknow.**

- ✦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a statue of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Lok Bhawan in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- ✦ He also laid the foundation stone for the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University in the Uttar Pradesh capital.
- ✦ The state government has given 50 acres of land for the varsity.

Foot Notes:**About UP****CM of UP:** Yogi Adityanath**Governor of UP:** Anandiben Patel.**16. All new Railway recruits to be inducted through UPSC civil services exams.**

- ✦ The Railway Board has now decided that all new recruits in railways will be inducted through UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) Civil Services Exams under five specialities.
- ✦ The decision comes days after the Union Cabinet approved big-ticket reforms in the railways by merging its eight cadres and department services into one single entity- the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS).
- ✦ This decision to merge services was to ensure that officers put railways first instead of their service which had become the case under the present system.

Foot Notes:**Minister of Railways:** Piyush Goyal**17. Turkey top court rules 'Wikipedia ban' breaches free speech.**

- ✦ Turkey's Constitutional Court ruled that the government's ban on access to online encyclopedia Wikipedia violated freedom of expression.
- ✦ The ban imposed by Turkey's Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) has remained in place since April 2017.
- ✦ Turkish officials said at the time the measure was needed as Wikipedia had failed to remove content deemed false from its pages that linked Turkey with terror groups.

Foot Notes:**About Turkey****Capital:** Ankara**Currency:** Turkish lira**18. India Japan held 5th round of maritime dialogue.**

- ✦ India and Japan planned to deepen maritime cooperation and made consultations on disarmament, non-proliferation and export control.
- ✦ The 5th Round of India-Japan Maritime Affairs Dialogue held in Tokyo with the Indian delegation led by Indra Mani Pandey, Additional Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs, while Japanese delegation was led by Ambassador Yamanaka A Osamu, Deputy Assistant Minister, Deputy Director-General in Foreign Policy Bureau.

Foot Notes:**About Japan**

Capital: Shinjuku
Prime Minister: Shinzō Abe
Currency: yen

19. Finance Minister releases stamp to commemorate DRI's role.

- ✦ The finance minister of India released a postage stamp to commemorate distinguished service and glorious contribution of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in protecting the nation.
- ✦ DRI plays an immense role to counter smuggling and preserve cultural heritage and the environment of the country.
- ✦ It is essential for DRI to keep pace with technologies such as data analytics to fight against contraband items such as gold and narcotics. Contraband is good that is against the law to trade or to import or export.

Foot Notes:

The Union Finance Minister of India: Nirmala Sitharaman.

20. India ranks 47th in house price appreciation during July, September.

- ✦ India ranks 47th in the world in terms of appreciation in housing prices as rates grew by only 0.6 percent during the July-September quarter over the year-ago period on slow demand, global property consultant Knight Frank.
- ✦ India stood at 11th position in the April-June quarter of 2019, with a 7.7 percent year-on-year rise in home prices.
- ✦ Hungary leads the index this quarter with 15.4 percent annual price growth, followed by Luxembourg at 11.4 percent and Croatia at 10.4 percent Slovakia is at number four with the home price rising by 9.7 percent, followed by Latvia (9 percent), Czech Republic (8.7 percent), China (8.5 percent), Jersey (8.5 percent), Mexico (8.4 percent) and Russia (8.1 percent).

21. Nepal bans Indian vehicles on Pokhara roads ahead of new year.

- ✦ Nepal banned vehicles with Indian number plates from running in the tourist hub of Pokhara ahead of the new year.
- ✦ Pokhara is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the country on Christmas and the new year. They decided to ban Indian vehicles in consultation with the district administration of Kaski to ease traffic congestion during celebrations.

Foot Notes:

About Nepal

Capital: Kathmandu
Currency: Nepalese rupee
Prime minister: KP Sharma Oli

22. "National Symposium of Poets 2020" organized by All India Radio.

- ✦ All India Radio organized the National Symposium of Poets 2020. Select poets of all 22 languages recognized in the constitution participated in the symposium.
- ✦ It is being held every year since 1956. The poets from all corners of the country gave their presentations and captivated the hearts of the people during the symposium.
- ✦ The symposium will be broadcasted on the eve of Republic Day and at all the centers of AIR.

Foot Notes:

Chairman of Prasar Bharti: A. Surya Prakash.

23. Mandu Festival begins at Mandu, Madhya Pradesh.

- ✦ The first edition of Mandu Festival begins at Mandu, picturesque fort city of Madhya Pradesh. The event is organized by Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board. The festival will witness a celebration of the historic heritage blended with the modern vibrancy of the city culture.
- ✦ The Mandu festival will offer an eclectic mix of performing arts, workshops, art installations, nature trails, walks, food, architecture and music to the visitors during the festival. The festival is based on the idea of “Khojne Me Kho Jao”.
- ✦ The Mandu festival will redefine the essence of the city & bring about the joy of establishing a new tourism hub in the state.

Foot Notes:**About Madhya Pradesh****Chief Minister:** Kamal Nath.**Governor:** Lal Ji Tandon.**24. Raksha Mantri launches DefExpo 2020 mobile app.**

- ✦ Raksha Mantri has launched the “DefExpo 2020” mobile app of the forthcoming DefExpo 2020. The app has been developed by the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- ✦ It provides detailed information about the daily events, participating exhibitors, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), guest speakers of seminars/webinars, publications, and directions of the venues and city weather. The main features of the app constitutes inform, engage and feedback.

Foot Notes:**Union Defence Minister of India:** Rajnath Singh.

International News & Foreign Affairs

1. Eight West African countries rename common currency to Eco.

- ✦ The eight West African nations have agreed to change the name of their common currency from ‘CFA franc’ to ‘Eco’, after they jointly severed the CFA franc’s links to former colonial ruler France.
- ✦ The announcement was made during a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron to Ivory Coast, who hailed the decision as a historic reform. Even though the deal took six months in making, common currency Eco will see the light of day in 2020.
- ✦ The 8 West African countries namely- Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Guinea-Bissau currently use CFA France as their currency. All these countries, except Guinea-Bissau, are former French colonies.

2. Archaeologist R. Nagaswamy honoured at the Silver Jubilee International Conference of Art in Dhaka.

- ✦ Archaeologist R. Nagaswamy was honoured at the Silver Jubilee International Conference of Art in Dhaka by Bangladesh culture minister K.M.Khalid for his contribution to art, archaeology, history and culture.
- ✦ Ramachandran Nagaswamy is an Indian historian, archaeologist and epigraphist. He served as the founder-director of Tamilnadu Archaeology Department. In 2018 he was awarded India’s third highest civilian award Padma Bhushan.

Foot Notes:**About Bangladesh****Capital:** Dhaka**Currency:** Bangladeshi taka**Prime minister:** Sheikh Hasina

3. India-Brazil MoU on Bio energy Cooperation gets Cabinet approval.

- ✦ Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Republic of India and Federative Republic of Brazil on Bio energy Cooperation.
- ✦ In 2016, during the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of Brazil in India, the two sides agreed to cooperate on research and development (R&D) of renewable energies, and in field of 2nd-generation biofuels.
- ✦ Therefore, in this regard, an MoU was also signed between two sides to provide a framework to cooperate as well as to promote investment in biofuel, bioelectricity and biogas supply-chains including industrial conversion, feedstock, distribution and end use sectors.

Foot Notes:**About Brazil****President:** Jair Bolsonaro**Capital:** Brasilia**Currency:** Brazilian real**4. Russia 'only country in world' with hypersonic weapons: Prez Putin.**

- ✦ President Vladimir Putin that Russia is the only country in the world that has hypersonic weapons. Speaking at a meeting with top military brass, Putin said that for the first time in history Russia has an edge in designing a new class of weapons unlike in the past when it was catching up with the United States.
- ✦ He said that the first unit equipped with the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle is set to go on duty this month, while that the air-launched Kinzhal hypersonic missiles already have entered service.
- ✦ Putin said that the missile flies 10 times faster than the speed of sound, has a range of more than 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) and can carry a nuclear or a conventional warhead.

Foot Notes:**About Russia****Capital:** Moscow**Currency:** Russian ruble**President:** Vladimir Putin**5. Typhoon Phanfone pummelled the central Philippines.**

- ✦ Typhoon Phanfone battered several central Philippine islands, making seven landfalls before heading out to the South China Sea. The typhoon brought chaos and a wet, miserable holiday season to millions in the mainly Catholic nation.
- ✦ Thousands were stranded at shuttered ports, while dozens of flights were cancelled.

Foot Notes:**About Philippines****Capital:** Manila

(The headquarters of the Asian Development bank is at Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines)

Currency: Philippine peso**6. UN gives green light to draft treaty to combat cybercrime.**

- ✦ UN General Assembly approved it will start the process of drafting a new international treaty to combat cybercrime over objections from the European Union, the United States, and other countries.
- ✦ Russian-drafted resolution was approved by the 193-member world body by a vote of 79-60 with 33 abstentions. The resolution establishes an expert committee representing all regions of the world to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes. It says the committee will meet in August 2020 to agree on an outline of its activities.

Foot Notes:**About UN General Assembly****President:** Tijjani Muhammad-Bande**Headquarters:** New York**Founder:** United Nations**Founded:** 1945

New Appointments and Person in News

1. Manuel Marrero Cruz appointed as Cuba's first PM in more than 40 years.

- ✦ Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has appointed Manuel Marrero Cruz as the country's first Prime Minister in more than four decades (40 years).
- ✦ Marrero Cruz who was named Prime Minister for a five-year term, has served as Cuban tourism minister for 16 years. He is an architect by trade and has helped boost Cuba's economy by making tourism one of the engines of growth.
- ✦ The post of Prime Minister was scrapped in 1976 by the then-revolutionary leader and Cuba's last Prime Minister Fidel Castro. In December 1976, Fidel Castro took the title of president of the State Council, which replaced the posts of President and Prime Minister.

Foot Notes:**About Cuba****Capital:** Havana**President:** Miguel Díaz-Canel

2. Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani adds \$18 billion to his fortune in 2019.

- ✦ According to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, The Indian tycoon added almost \$17 billion to his wealth about \$61 billion in comparison, Alibaba Group founder Jack Ma's net worth grew \$11.3 billion, while Jeff Bezos lost \$13.2 billion.
- ✦ Mukesh Ambani's fortune fueled by a 40% jump in the shares of his Reliance Industries Ltd.

3. Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla appointed as Foreign Secretary.

- ✦ Narendra Modi government approved the appointment of Indian ambassador to the United States Harsh Vardhan Shringla as the next foreign secretary. He replaced Vijay Gokhale. He is the 33rd foreign secretary of the country.
- ✦ Harsh Vardhan Shringla would take over next month after the completion of Vijay Gokhale's two-year term on January 28, 2020.
- ✦ A 1984-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer and a fluent French speaker, Harsh Vardhan Shringla served as an ambassador to Bangkok from 2014 to 2016 and later as a High Commissioner to Dhaka for two years.
- ✦ Harsh Vardhan Shringla has also served at UNESCO in France, the UN in New York besides Vietnam, Israel, and South Africa.

Foot Notes:**Minister of External Affairs:**Subrahmanyam Jaishankar

4. Monisha Ghosh named 1st woman CTO at FCC in US.

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

5. Dr Sangita Reddy appointed as the President of FICCI for 2019-20 after succeeding Sandip Somany.

- ✦ Dr Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group was appointed as the President of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) for the year 2019-20, during FICCI's 92nd Annual Convention in New Delhi. She succeeds Mr Sandip Somany, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, HSIL Limited.
- ✦ President of the Walt Disney Company APAC & Chairman of Star & Disney India, Mr Uday Shankar has been elevated as Senior Vice President of FICCI.
- ✦ Similarly, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), Mr Sanjiv Mehta was appointed as the Vice President of FICCI.

Foot Notes:**About FICCI****Established:** 1927**Headquarters:** New Delhi

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6. Ravi Mohan appointed as the new chairman of ESAF SFB.

- ✦ P R Ravi Mohan was appointed as the new chairman of ESAF Small Finance Bank (SFB). Ravi has replaced R Prabha, whose tenure as chairman has ended.
- ✦ Ravi previously worked as chief general manager Department of Banking Operations and Development (DBoD) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). He also previously headed the Banking Supervision.
- ✦ ESAF Stands for Evangelical Social Action Forum.

Foot Notes:**About ESAF small Finance Bank:****Fact:** ESAF started its operations as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) in 1992 as Evangelical Social Action Forum.**Former name:** ESAF Microfinance.**Incorporated:** May 5, 2016.**Headquarters:** Thrissur, Kerala.**7. Niranjn Hiranandani takes over as Assocham President.**

- ✦ Niranjn Hiranandani took over as the new president of the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (Assocham), the country's apex organization of industry and trade.
- ✦ He succeeds Balkrishan Goenka, the Welspun Group Chairman.
- ✦ Niranjn Hiranandani is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of the Hiranandani Group of Companies.

Foot Notes:**About Assocham****Headquarters location:** New Delhi**Founded:** 1921**Chairpersons:** Balkrishan Goenka**8. Hemant Soren to be sworn in as Jharkhand CM on 29th December.**

- ✚ Hemant Soren is scheduled to take oath as the new Chief Minister of Jharkhand December 29, 2019 at the Morabadi Ground in Ranchi. Soren will be administered the oath of the office by Jharkhand Governor Droupadi Murmu.
- ✚ The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha will form the new government in the state in alliance with the Congress and the RJD. Their pre-poll alliance won a total of 47 seats in the 81-member Jharkhand assembly in the recently concluded Jharkhand elections 2019.
- ✚ The announcement of the oath-taking ceremony was made through an official communiqué by the Raj Bhawan on December 26, 2019. The state's Chief Secretary DK Tiwari had met Soren at his residence on the same day to invite him for the ceremony.

Foot Notes:**About Jharkhand****Capital:** Ranchi**Governor:** Draupadi Murmu**9. Ratan Tata, Azim Premji, Gautam Adani among India's top 10 most Googled business tycoons.**

- ✚ Tata Sons chairman Ratan Tata emerged as India's most searched business tycoon on Google in 2019.
- ✚ Google released a Year in Search 2019 report shows what was trending on the world's largest search engine during the year in India.

Here is the top 10 list of trending searches for business personalities in India.

- 1) Ratan Tata
- 2) Azim Premji
- 3) Lakshmi Mittal
- 4) Cyrus S. Poonawalla
- 5) Anand Mahindra
- 6) Shiv Nadar
- 7) Gautam Adani
- 8) Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw
- 9) Uday Kotak
- 10) Radhakishan Damani

Foot Notes:**About Google****Headquarters:** Mountain View, California, USA**CEO:** Sundar Pichai (Since 2015)

Banking

1. Gross NPA ratio improves to 9.1% at Sept end from 11.2% y-o-y: RBI.

- ✚ As the bad loan recognition process nears completion, the health of the banking system has improved with the gross non-performing loan ratio remaining stable at 9.1 per cent as of September-end, the same level as in FY19, according to the RBI.

- ✦ However, the numbers indicate major improvement on a full-year basis, as in FY18 the ratio stood at a high of 11.2 per cent and slipped to 9.1 per cent in FY19, the RBI said in its annual report on trends and progress of banking in 2018-19.
- ✦ "The gross NPA (Non Performing Asset) ratio of all banks declined in FY19 (to 9.1 per cent from 11.2 per cent in FY18) after rising for seven consecutive years, as recognition of bad loans has neared completion," RBI said in the report.

Foot Notes:**About RBI****Headquarters:** Mumbai**Founded:** 1 April 1935, Kolkata**Governor:** Shaktikanta Das**Deputy Governor:** N S Vishwanathan, B P Kanungo and M K Jain.**2. Government to infuse Rs 8,655 crore in Allahabad Bank, IOB and UCO Bank.**

- ✦ The Government of India approved the release of Rs 8,655 crore as fresh capital to three public sector banks. The bank includes Allahabad Bank, Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) and UCO Bank. The infusion did for preferential allotment of shares.
- ✦ The Fresh capital amounting to Rs 2,153 crore allocated to Allahabad Bank, Rs 2,142 crore to UCO Bank and Rs 4,630 crore to Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) for preferential allotment of shares.

Foot Notes:**About Allahabad Bank****Headquarters:** Kolkata**CEO:** S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao**About IOB****Headquarters:** Chennai**CEO:** Shri Karnam Sekar**Founder:** M. Ct. M.
Chidambaram Chettyar**About UCO****Headquarters:** Kolkata**CEO:** Atul Kumar Goel**3. Airtel Payments Bank enables 24x7 NEFT transfers.**

- ✦ Airtel Payments Bank announced its customers will now be able to use the National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) any time of the day in-line with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines.
- ✦ The facility will be available to customers on a 24x7 basis even on holidays. Customers can enable them to receive or send funds to any bank from anywhere, anytime.

Foot Notes:**About Airtel Payments Bank**

It receives a payment bank license from the Reserve Bank of India and it became the first live payments bank in the country.

Headquarters: New Delhi**Founded:** 2019

Science Tech & Defence

1. India successfully test-fires Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM) system.

- ✦ Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile System (QRSAM) developed by DRDO has been successfully flight tested from Integrated Test Range in Odisha's Chandipur.
- ✦ The missile was flight tested with full configuration in deployment mode intercepting the target in mid-air and meeting mission objectives. The entire event was monitored by Ground Telemetry Systems, Range Radar Systems, Electro Optical Tracking System, etc.
- ✦ QRSAM weapon system, which operates on the move, comprises of fully automated Command and Control System, Active Array Battery Surveillance Radar, Active Array Battery Multifunction Radar and Launcher. Both radars are four walled having 360-degree coverage with search on move and track

on move capability. The system is compact with minimum number of vehicles for a firing unit. Single stage solid propelled missile has mid course inertial navigation system with two-way data link and terminal active seeker developed by DRDO

Foot Notes:**About DRDO****Foundation year:** 1958**DRDO Chairman:** Satheesh Reddy**2. NPL scientists develop ink to stop fake passports and currency notes.**

- ✦ The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and National Physical Laboratory (NPL) developed an ink to combat the problem of fake printing of passports and counterfeiting of currency notes. The ink has a new security feature of protecting itself against duplicity.
- ✦ The ink was produced based on single excitable dual emissive luminescent pigment. It was developed based on the concept of fluorescence and phosphorescence phenomena. Currently, the currency notes display only one color with the emission of wavelength. However, in the ink developed by the scientists, features change in pigment color after the notes are printed.

Foot Notes:**About Council of Scientific and Industrial Research****Head:** Shekhar C. Mande**Founder:** Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar**Founded:** 26 September 1942**About National Physical Laboratory****Founded:** 4 January 1947**Headquarters location:** New Delhi**Director:** Dr. D.K. Aswal**3. WHO for 1st time approved Biosimilar of “Trastuzumab” for breast cancer treatment.**

- ✦ The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that for the 1st time it had approved a “biosimilar” medicine of Trastuzumab named “Ontruzant” to make cheaper breast cancer treatment at an affordable rate to women globally.
- ✦ The medicine is derived from living sources rather than chemicals. The biosimilar medicine of the Trastuzumab drug was supplied by Samsung Bioepis co Ltd.

Foot Notes:**About WHO****Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.**Director general:** Tedros Adhanom.**4. MiG 27: Indian Air Force bids farewell to 'Hero' of Kargil conflict.**

- ✦ MiG-27 fighter jet is known as the Kargil war hero that decommissioned today with its last flight. It was an Indian Air Force’s lethal fighter aircraft which became the main attacker during the 1999 Kargil war. The last fighter aircraft of the squadron took a flight from Jodhpur airbase.
- ✦ The squadron will be number plated on 31 March 2020, which means it will no more in the service. The MiG-27's squadron in Jodhpur is the last batch of aircraft. However, this squadron was known as one of the IAF’s best team.
- ✦ The MiG-27 has a wonderful past in the history of the Indian Air Force. The MiG-class aircraft was purchased from Soviet Russia while it was first inducted into the Indian Air Force in 1981.

Foot Notes:**Chief of Indian Air Force:** Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria**Air Force Day:** 8 October 1932

5. China, Russia and Iran to hold naval drills in the Gulf of Oman.

- ✦ China, Russia and Iran hold trilateral naval exercises in the Gulf of Oman. The move is done by three countries in the volatile Middle East.
- ✦ The trilateral exercise will be held in the Gulf of Oman from December 27 to 30. The Chinese Navy sent a guided-missile destroyer to participate in the drills adding that the exercise aims to deepen the exchanges and cooperation between the navies of the three countries and demonstrating the goodwill and ability of the three parties to jointly maintain world peace and maritime security.
- ✦ The Gulf of Oman borders Iran and Pakistan on the north, Oman on the south, the United Arab Emirates on the west and faces the Gujarat coast. Wu declined to directly respond to a question of whether the drills were in any way connected to recent tensions in the region and US naval drills.

Foot Notes:**About China****Currency:** Renminbi**Capital:** Beijing**President:** Xi Jinping**About Russia****President:** Vladimir Putin**Capital:** Moscow**Currency:** Russian Ruble**About Iran****Capital:** Tehran**Currency:** Iranian Rial**President:** Hassan Rouhani**6. Russia deploys its first Avangard Hypersonic missile system.**

- ✦ Russia's first missile unit equipped with Avangard Hypersonic glide vehicle. Russia's defence ministry said that new hypersonic weapon with the latest strategic missiles of the intercontinental-range has become operational.
- ✦ The nuclear-capable missiles can travel more than 20 times the speed of sound. The Avangard can carry a nuclear weapon of up to 2 megatons.
- ✦ Avangard is designed using new composite materials to withstand temperatures of up to 2,000 Celsius resulting from a flight through the atmosphere at hypersonic speeds.

Foot Notes:**About Russia****Capital:** Moscow**Currency:** Russian ruble**President:** Vladimir Putin

Important Days

1. National Farmers Day celebrated on 23rd December.

- ✦ India celebrates National Farmers Day on 23rd December to commemorate the birth anniversary of the 5th Prime Minister of India, Choudhary Charan Singh. He was a farmer's leader and he had introduced many policies to improve the lives of the Indian farmers. The day is being observed since 2001.
- ✦ Kisan Diwas is being celebrated in several parts of the country in order to promote importance of farmers in the society. It also aims at establishing the fact that overall social and economic development of the country depends on the farmers. The day is widely celebrated in states such as UP, Haryana, Punjab and MP.
- ✦ Choudhary Charan Singh served as the Prime Minister of India between 28 July 1979 and 14 January 1980. He is often referred to as the 'champion of India's peasants'.

2. National Consumer Day observed on 24 December.

- ✦ The objective is to highlight the importance of the consumer movement and the need to make every consumer more aware of his or her rights and responsibilities. The theme of this year is "alternate consumer grievance/dispute redressal". On this day the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted.
- ✦ The Act aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation, such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.

- ✦ Parliament gave its nod to the landmark Consumer Protection Bill, 2019 which aims to protect the rights of consumers by establishing authorities for timely and effective administration and settlement of consumers dispute, this year.
- ✦ The new Act has replaced the more than three decades old Consumer Protection Act, 1986. The CCPA would make interventions to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices. The agency can also initiate class action, including enforcing recall, refund and return of products

Foot Notes:

Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution: Shri Ram Vilas Paswan

3. India pays homage to Shaheed Udham Singh on his 120th birth anniversary.

- ✦ India pays homage to the great revolutionary, Shaheed Udham Singh on his 120th birth anniversary. He was born on this day in 1899 in the Sangrur district of Punjab.
- ✦ Udham Singh was present in the Jallianwala Bagh Amritsar on the fateful Baisakhi Day of 13 April 1919. He avenged the massacre by killing General O Dwyer in March 1940 and hanged by the British in London.
- ✦ Vaisakhi known as Baisakhi, Vaishakhi is a historical and religious festival in Hinduism and Sikhism. It is celebrated on 13 or 14 April every year.

Sports

1. Pat Cummins becomes most expensive overseas IPL player.

- ✦ The Australian pacer Pat Cummins, with a base price of Rs.2 crore, became the most expensive overseas player in Indian Premier League (IPL) as he was sold to Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) for a whopping Rs.15.50 crore(\$2.2 million).
- ✦ Kolkata Night Riders shelled out Rs.15.5 crore, nearly 43% of their purse, for the New South Welshman at the auction for IPL 2020, the 12th edition of Indian Premier League tournament.
- ✦ The 26-year-old is currently the number one ranked Test bowler in the world. He has previously played for Delhi Capitals or Delhi Daredevils (as they were known then) in 2017 edition and Kolkata Knight Riders in the 2014 edition.

2. MS Dhoni named captain of CA's ODI team of the decade.

- ✦ Former India skipper and wicket-keeper batsman MS Dhoni been named captain of Cricket Australia's (CA) ODI team of the decade and the line-up features three Indian players.
- ✦ Apart from Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have made the cut in CA's team.
- ✦ CA's ODI team of the decade: Rohit Sharma, Hashim Amla, Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers, Shakib Al Hasan, Jos Buttler, MS Dhoni (c), Mitchell Starc, Trent Boult, Lasith Malinga, Rashid Khan.



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Books and Authors

1. S Gurumurthy releases book titled Politics of Opportunism in New Delhi.

- ✦ Political Analyst S Gurumurthy released a book titled Politics of Opportunism at a function in New Delhi. The book written by R P N Singh throws light on the subject related to the rise of regional parties and Centre -States relation.
- ✦ RNP Singh is a former officer of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India. He has also earned the coveted Presidents Police Medal, Indian Police Medal, the Sukriti and Kautilya awards for his distinguished services.

Awards

1. Aditya became 1st child from Kerala to receive Bharat Award for bravery.

- ✦ Bharat award for bravery was announced. Aditya K. of Ramanattukara, Kozhikode, Kerala became the first child from the State to receive the highest honour award for bravery, the Bharat award. He was awarded for saving 20 people from a burning bus on the move.
- ✦ The awards will be presented by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the Republic Day event in New Delhi on January
- ✦ The national bravery award is given by the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) for the brave acts done by children neglecting their own safety. 1 Bharat Award, 5 special awards, and 15 general awards are announced annually by ICCW.

Foot Notes:

About Kerala

Chief Minister: Pinarayi Vijayan.

Governor: Arif Mohammad Khan.

Capital: Thiruvananthapuram.

2. Major Anoop Mishra awarded Army Design Bureau Excellence Award.

- ✦ Indian Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat felicitated Major Anoop Mishra with prestigious Army Design Bureau (ADB) Excellence Award for indigenously developing 'Sarvatra Kavach', a bulletproof jacket that can provide protection against various ammunition including that from sniper steel bullets.
- ✦ Maj. Anoop is presently posted as Instructor at College of Military Engineering, Pune and was among the four awardees felicitated by Gen. Rawat.
- ✦ The awards were conferred at Army Technology Seminar (ARTECH) held on 23 December 2019 at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi. It was organized by Army Design Bureau (ADB), Indian Army jointly with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM).

Obituaries

1. Delhi's oldest voter Bachan Singh dies at 111.

- ✦ Bachan Singh, the oldest voter in Delhi who hogged headlines in May when he voted in the Lok Sabha election, passed away, his family said. He was 111.

- ✦ Singh died around 6.30 am. He had not been eating properly for the past three to four days, his grandson Sonu Singh said. Bachan Singh has never missed out on voting in an election since 1951, his youngest son, Jasbeer Singh, 63, said.
- ✦ Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Ranbir Singh had felicitated Bachan Singh and invited him to vote in the general election.

Foot Notes:

Chief Election Commissioner: Sh. Sunil Arora

2. Renowned Hindi author Ganga Prasad Vimal dies at 80.

- ✦ Renowned Hindi author Ganga Prasad Vimal and his two family members were killed in a road accident in southern Sri Lanka.
- ✦ The 80-year-old author was travelling with his family in a van, which crashed into a container truck from behind on the Southern Expressway in the Kurundugahahathapma area.
- ✦ He wrote more than one dozen poetry collections, short story collections and novels. His last novel, Manushkhor, was published in 2013. He received several Hindi literary awards.

3. England's Football World Cup winner Martin Peters passes away.

- ✦ Former West Ham and Tottenham midfielder Martin Peters, who scored England's second goal in the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, passed away.
- ✦ He joined West Ham in 1959 as a 15-year-old, made his debut in 1962 and was a key player in the side who won the 1965 Cup Winners Cup final at Wembley.

4. 'Colours of the Mountain' author Da Chen passes away.

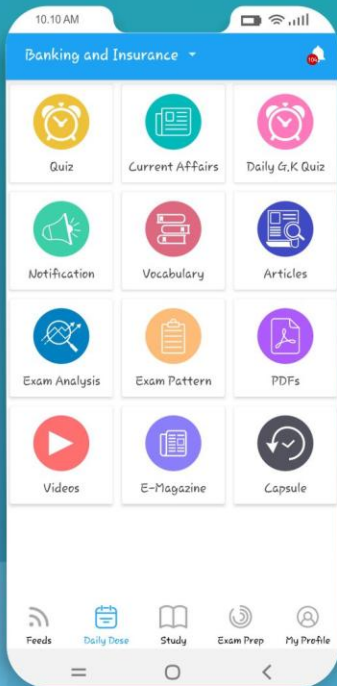
- ✦ China's brilliant storyteller, Da Chen, who created the critically acclaimed memoir "Colours of the Mountain" passed away recently.
- ✦ In "Colours of the Mountain" he recounted the abuses he and his family suffered during the latter years of the country's Cultural Revolution. The book was published in seven languages. His last book which was published recently was "Girl Under a Red Moon".

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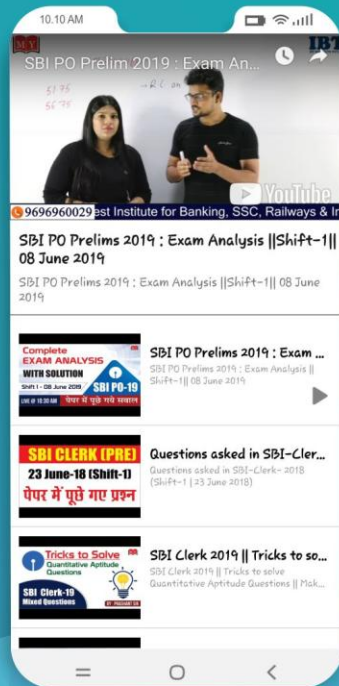
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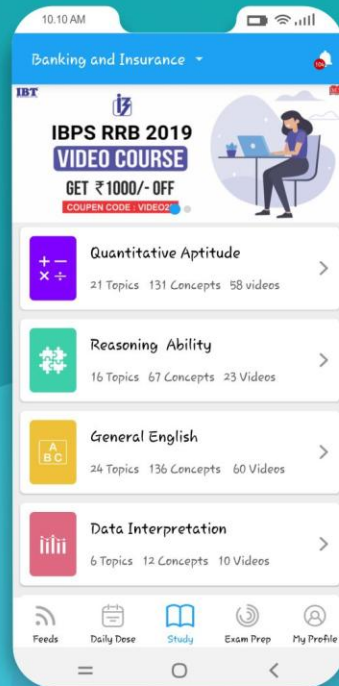
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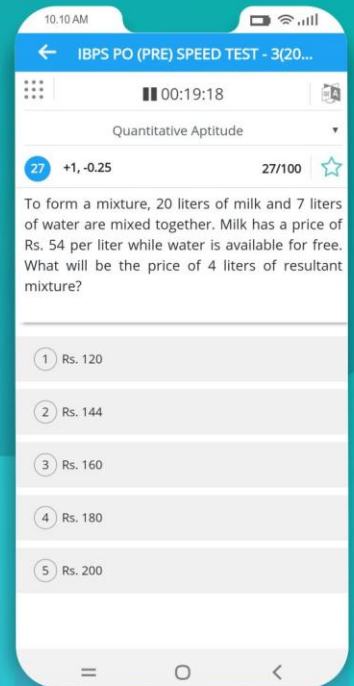
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