

Weekly Current Affairs

17-23 January, 2021

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NATIONAL NEWS

1. India will not have foreign head of state as Chief Guest for Republic Day 2021

- India will not invite any foreign dignitary to be the Chief Guest at the upcoming Republic Day celebrations, the Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs said.
- Addressing the weekly press briefing, Anurag Srivastava said the decision was prompted by the global pandemic which has intensified in several countries.
- "Due to the global COVID-19 situation, it has been decided that this year there will not be a foreign Head of State or Head of Government as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day event," said Mr. Srivastava.

2. Kite festival Shakrain celebrated in Dhaka

- The traditional festival of Shakrain was celebrated in several parts of Dhaka.
- On this occasion, people engaged in kite flying and fireworks among many other recent additions like 'DJ Party' to celebrate this occasion. The kite flying competition is followed by winter cake festival -- pithapuli in which rice cake pudding is eaten by people.
- This is a centuries-old tradition in several parts of Bangladesh celebrated on the last day of the Bengali month of Paush. People in the old Dhaka city of Shakhari Bazar, Laxmibazar, Bangshal and Sutrapur among others celebrated this festival with great joy.

3. PM Modi launched World's largest COVID-19 vaccination drive in the country

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination program through video conferencing.
- A total of 3006 session sites across all states and union territories has been virtually connected during the launch.
- The drive aims to first inoculate millions of its healthcare and frontline workers and reach an estimated 3 crore people by the end of its first phase
- The body will develop immunity against the corona only 2 weeks after the second dos

4. Govt brings forward target of 20% ethanol-blending with gasoline by 2025

- India plans to achieve 20% ethanol-blending with gasoline by 2025, five years ahead of its previous target, to help reduce its dependence on costly oil imports.

- In 2020, the government had set a target of reaching 10% ethanol-blending by 2022 –meaning 10% of ethanol mixed with 90% of gasoline – and 20% by 2030.
- India relies on foreign suppliers to meet more than 80% of its demand.

5.PM announces Rs 1,000-crore startup India seed fund

- The government will launch a Rs 1,000-crore seed fund for startups, called Startup India Seed Fund, which will help startups with the initial capital for growth and operations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.
- “Going ahead, the government will provide guarantees to help startups raise debt-capital. We are trying to build a startup ecosystem which functions on the ‘of the youth, by the youth, for the youth’ mantra,” the Prime Minister said, speaking at the Prarambh Startup India International Summit in an online address.
- During the address, Modi said the target for India’s startups over the next five years should be to become global giants in their respective service areas.

6.PM Modi flags off 8 trains to boost connectivity to Statue of Unity

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off eight trains from various parts of the country connecting to Kevadiya in Gujarat, where the Statue of Unity is located, in a bid to increase tourism in the belt.
- Addressing the video conference, Modi said, “In the history of Indian Railways, for the first time, so many trains from various corners of the country have been flagged off for one place. After all, Kevadiya is a place that has its identity with someone who has united the country and given the message of ‘Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat’.

7.'Indian Army Losing More Personnel In Suicides Than Enemy Action': Study

- "The Indian armed forces have been losing over 100 soldiers every year due to suicides and fratricides leading to the "grim reality" of one soldier dying every third day," the study states.
- The Indian Army has been losing more personnel every year in suicides and untoward incidents than in any enemy action and more than half of its soldiers seem to be under severe stress at present, a study by think tank United Service Institution of India (USI) has revealed.
- "Prolonged exposure of Indian Army personnel to CI (counter-insurgency)/CT (counter-terrorism) environment has been one of the contributory factors for increased stress levels," research undertaken by Col A K Mor, Senior Research Fellow at the USI during 2019-20 states.

8. Central Govt announced decision to celebrate Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Birthday as 'Parakram Diwas'

- The Government of India (GOI) decided to celebrate the birthday of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as "Prakram Diwas" to honour the great freedom fighter and founder of Azad Hind Fauj. The government will now celebrate Netaji's birthday on January 23 as a day of valor. The Union Ministry of Culture announced the decision in a release.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit West Bengal on January 23 on the occasion of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary celebrations which will held at Victoria Memorial.

9. Nagpur's Gorewada Zoo renamed as Balasaheb Thackeray Zoological Park

- The Maharashtra government renamed Nagpur's Gorewada International Zoo as Balasaheb Thackeray Zoological Park. The zoological park, spread over 1,900 hectares, will be inaugurated on January 26 by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.
- Confirming the announcement, the state Forest Minister Sanjay Rathod said an official Government Resolution (GR) was issued in this regard.
- Aiming to protect forests and promote tourism, Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), had announced the setting up of the 'international-standard' bio park in August 2019. The task was entrusted to the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd.

10. 1st consignment of green peas and white brinjals shipped on direct flight from Varanasi to Sharjah

- The first consignment of green peas and white brinjals of Varanasi had been shipped from direct flight from Varanasi to Sharjah.
- The shipment was flagged-off by Dr. M Angamuthu, Chairman of agricultural and processed food products export development authority, APEDA and Deepak Agrawal, Divisional Commissioner Varanasi.
- After successfully exporting Langda and the Dussehri variety of mangoes and green chillies of neighbouring district Ghazipur to many districts it is time to taste the fresh green peas and white brinjal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency Varanasi.

11. Ministry of Minority Affairs organised 24th Hunar Haat in Lucknow from 22nd January to 4th February

- Ministry of Minority Affairs organised the 24th Hunar Haat at Avadh Shilpgram, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh from 22nd January to 4th February with the theme of Vocal for Local. Artisans and craftsmen from 31 States and Union Territories of the country will participate in the Hunar Haat.

- About 500 artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts from different States including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Chattisgarh, Jammu-Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal will display and sell their exquisite handmade products.
- The Ministry said, renowned artists of the country will perform cultural events on the theme of Atma Nirbhar Bharat every day at Hunar Haat.

12. India sends 1 million doses of COVID vaccine to Nepal as gift under 'Vaccine Maitri' Initiative

- India sent 1 million doses of a COVID vaccine to Nepal as a gift under the 'Vaccine Maitri' Initiative. Nepal health minister Hridayesh Tripathi said the vaccine gifted by India will be given to health workers and other front-line personnel within a week to 10 days.
- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar confirmed on Twitter that Nepal received Indian vaccines. The Minister said in another tweet, along with a photograph of Air India flight that carried the consignments to Dhaka, Touchdown in Dhaka. 'Vaccine Maitri' reaffirms the highest priority accorded by India to relations with Bangladesh.

13. Five die in fire at Serum Institute's plant near Pune

- A fire broke at Serum Institute of India's under-construction site at its factory near Pune, which killed five people and led to enormous financial damages to the company.
- The fire broke out afternoon at a site near the company's existing production at Manjri, a suburb near Pune, where vaccine manufacturing equipment was being installed for upcoming production of non-covid vaccines, a person aware of the development said.
- While the company's covid-19 vaccine Covishield is being produced at another site at Manjri, there has been no impact on its manufacturing, and the extent of damage and impact on other upcoming vaccines will only be determined in the next few days, he said.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. North Korea unveils new submarine-launched ballistic missile

- A new type of submarine-launched ballistic missile was part of weapons displayed at a military parade in North Korea.
- The parade, held in the capital Pyongyang's Kim Il-sung Square to celebrate the eighth congress of the ruling Workers' Party, was attended by Kim and other senior officials, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

- The eight-day meeting that wrapped up was held for the first time since 2016 to prepare the country's strategy for the next five years.
- The congress also elected Kim as the general secretary of the ruling party.

2. Indian Embassy in China restricts Republic Day flag hoisting ceremony to staff due to COVID-19 measures

- The Indian Embassy here announced that the flag hoisting ceremony for this year's Republic Day on January 26 will be confined to its staff only, citing the resurgence of coronavirus cases in provinces adjoining Beijing and related restrictions.
- In view of the COVID-19 pandemic-related current scenario in Beijing and its adjoining provinces, Hebei and Heilongjiang and related measures, including restriction of movements, observation of prevention and control measures and prohibition of large gatherings, the flag hoisting ceremony will be held with participation of officials of embassy only, a note from the embassy said.
- Every year, a large number of Indian diaspora in Beijing and nearby provinces attend the flag hoisting ceremony on the Republic Day and Independence Day at the embassy.

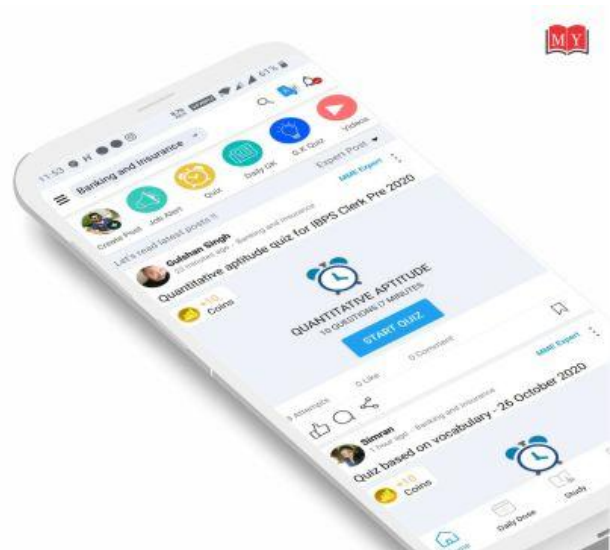


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3. US designates UAE, Bahrain as 'major strategic partners'

- The United States has designated the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain as its major strategic partners, the White House announced, amid preparations for a transition from the Donald Trump administration to that of President-elect Joe Biden.
- The announcement was made by White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany here.
- "Today, we are announcing the designation of both the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrain as 'Major Security Partners' of the United States," McEnany said.

- The designation of a ‘Major Security Partner’ is a status unique to the UAE and the Kingdom of Bahrain, she added.

4.Sri Lanka reopens to tourists after 10 months

- Sri Lanka reopened to foreign tourists after a nearly 10-month pandemic closure that cut deeply into the Indian Ocean island nation's lucrative travel industry.
- Full operations also resumed Thursday at the island's two international airports, accommodating the commercial flights.
- Under new protocols to prevent the spread of Covid-19, tourists must be tested for the virus in their country 72 hours prior to their flight, when they arrive at their hotel in Sri Lanka and again seven days later. They must stay in a “travel bubble” designated in 14 tourism zones without mixing with the local population. About 180 hotels have been earmarked for tourist accommodations.
- The resumption of tourism follows a pilot project that began December 26 in which 1,500 tourists from Ukraine visited Sri Lanka in such a travel bubble.

5.Joe Biden makes Covid-19 test and quarantine mandatory for people entering US

- US President Joe Biden has signed a series of executive orders to address COVID-19 challenges, including making coronavirus test followed by quarantine mandatory for all travellers coming from overseas.
- In addition to wearing masks, everyone flying to the United States from another country will need to test before they get on that plane, before they depart, and quarantine when they arrive in America, Biden said at a White House event wherein he signed the orders.

New Appointments and Person in News

1.Kiran-Mazumdar-Shaw selected as one of US-India Business Council's Vice-chair

- US-India Business Council (USIBC) has selected Biocon Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw as one of its vice-chairs effective immediately. US Chamber of Commerce's USIBC on January 14 announced three vice-chairs to its 2021 Global Board of Directors. The two other business executives joining Shaw as vice-chairs are Amway CEO Milind Pant and Edward Knight who is the vice-chair at Nasdaq.
- USIBC has strengthened its leadership team as it plans to work with the new Joe Biden-led US administration. The Council advocates for strengthening US-India commercial relationship for the future. The three new appointees

will now work with USIBC President Nisha Biswal and the Council's policy directors. Their aim is to elevate priorities in important sectors and also to lead meetings between the government and the industries, USIBC explained in a press release.

2.Union Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurates Road Safety Month 2021

- Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated Road Safety Month where he highlighted the central Government's commitment towards safety.
- "Till now, we have been observing National Road Safety Week. But from today, we will observe National Road Safety Month. 70% of deaths are in the age group of 18-45 years," Nitin Gadkari said.
- Gadkari also said that there is a need to save lives in the country where 415 people are dying every day due to road accidents.

3.Yoweri Museveni won sixth term as Uganda's President

- Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni had scored a decisive election victory to win a sixth term, the country's election commission said, but his main rival Bobi Wine denounced the results as fraudulent and urged citizens to reject them.
- The 76-year-old Museveni, in power since 1986 and one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, dismissed the allegations of fraud in an evening address to the nation, saying election may turn out to be the "most cheating free" in Uganda's history.
- The Electoral Commission said final counts showed Museveni won 5.85 million votes, or 58.6%, while Wine had 3.48 million votes (34.8%).

4.Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan digitally chairs 148th session of Executive Board of WHO

- Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan digitally chaired the 148th session of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization through video conference. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that COVID-19 vaccines are being successfully produced across many countries and digital technologies are being adopted.
- He said, while the year 2020 is described as the year of science, the Year 2021 shall be the year of global solidarity and survival and it will be the harbinger of a Decade of Action. He said, this year, we will see intensified international cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat the pandemic, using enhanced scientific knowledge and best practices.
- The Health Minister said, the recent breakthroughs on COVID-19 vaccines offer a ray of hope and it should reach everyone.

5.Narendra Modi named Somnath Temple trust chairman, becomes second PM to hold post

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was unanimously chosen as the new chairman of the trust which manages the world-famous Somnath Temple at Prabhas Patan town in Gujarat's Gir-Somnath district, becoming the second PM to hold the post.
- Modi, one of the trustees of the Shree Somnath Trust, was named to the top post unanimously during a meeting which he attended by via video conferencing.
- "The trustees unanimously chose Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi as the next chairman of the Trust, to guide it in the times to come.
- "The Prime Minister accepted the responsibility and also appreciated the efforts of Team Somnath," said a PIB release in Delhi.

6.Vishwavir Ahuja re-appointed as RBL Bank chief

- The board of directors of RBL Bank had approved the re-appointment of Vishwavir Ahuja as the Managing Director and CEO of the bank for three years.
- The re-appointment is with effect from June 30, 2021, to June 29, 2024, and the same is being recommended to the Reserve Bank of India and shall be subject to their approval, the bank said in a regulatory filing. He has been MD & CEO of RBL Bank since June 30, 2010.
- Prior to joining RBL Bank, he was the MD & CEO of Bank of America, India, from 2001 to 2009. As per the regulatory filing, under Ahuja's leadership, the deposits of the bank have grown almost 40 times, while advances have grown more than 45 times since 2011.

7.Bhawana Kanth to become the 1st woman fighter pilot to take part in Republic Day parade

- Flight lieutenant Bhawana Kanth is set to become the first woman fighter pilot to take part in the Republic Day parade.
- She will be a part of the Indian Air Force's (IAF's) tableau that will showcase mock-ups of the light combat aircraft, light combat helicopter and the Sukhoi-30 fighter plane. She is currently posted at an airbase in Rajasthan where she flies the MiG-21 Bison fighter plane.

8.Dutch PM Mark Rutte and his entire cabinet quits over welfare scandal

- Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and his entire Cabinet resigned to take political responsibility for a scandal involving investigations into child welfare payments that wrongly labeled thousands of parents as fraudsters.

- Rutte said he had informed King Willem-Alexander of his decision and pledged that his government would continue work to compensate affected parents as quickly as possible and to battle the coronavirus.
- “We are of one mind that if the whole system has failed, we all must take responsibility, and that has led to the conclusion that I have just offered the king, the resignation of the entire Cabinet,” Rutte said.

9.Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani announces ‘Mukhyamantri Bagayat Vikas Mission’

- Chief minister Vijay Rupani has announced for the formation of ‘Mukhyamantri Bagayat Vikas Mission’. The aim is to accelerate agriculture, horticulture and promote farming of herbal plants. It will also create employment opportunities through an increase in the export of such products.
- While announcing the formation of Horticulture Development Mission, the Chief Minister said, “Agriculture development has not attained its peak due to arid, semi-arid and saline patches of land in the state.

10.Joe Biden takes over as President, Kamala Harris as Vice President of US

- Joe Biden took oath as the 46th President of the United States of America at a scaled-back ceremony in the US Capitol building in Washington last night that was largely stripped of its usual pomp due to the Coronavirus and security concerns.
- He spoke of unifying the country and pledged that he will be the President for all Americans. He said, America has been tested and they have come out stronger for it. Mr. Biden said, they will repair their alliances and engage once again. 78-year-old Biden has become the oldest US President in history. His deputy Kamala Harris was also sworn in as 49th Vice-President of the country. The daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, Kamala Harris made history as America's first woman and first person with south Asian roots to take the office of the Vice President.

11.Govt appoints Siddhartha Mohanty as MD of LIC from Feb 1

- The government appointed Siddhartha Mohanty, currently serving as the managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of LIC Housing Finance, as the MD of India’s largest insurer Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) from February 1 onwards.
- He will serve as the MD of LIC till his superannuation on June 30, 2023. Mohanty will be replacing TC Suseel Kumar, who is set to retire on January 31, 2021.
- “The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the department of financial services for appointment of Shri Siddhartha Mohanty, CEO, LIC Housing Finance as MD, LIC, in the pay

scale of Rs 205,400 – Rs 224,400 with effect from the date of his assumption of charge of the post on or after 01.02.2021 and upto the date of his superannuation or until further orders, whichever is earlier”, the government notification said.

12.Sundaram Finance appoints Rajiv Lochan as its managing director

- Chennai-based non-banking finance company Sundaram Finance announces appointment of Rajiv Lochan to succeed its current managing director T.T. Srinivasaraghavan, who will retire on March 31, 2021
- Lochan, who holds the position of director of strategy, will assume the role of MD of the NBFC, effective April 1, 2021. Srinivasaraghavan will retire on completion of 38 years of service, which includes an 18-year tenure as its managing director. However, he would remain on the board and play a mentorship role, the company said.

BANKING

1.ICICI Bank tied up with fintech Niyo to issue prepaid cards to MSMEs

- ICICI Bank had tied up with Niyo, a new age fintech, to issue prepaid cards to workers of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs will now be able to get ‘ICICI Bank Niyo Bharat Payroll Card’ powered by Visa, for their blue-collar workers, who are mostly under-banked. With this, MSMEs can upload the salaries of their workers on the card, which the workers can then utilise as per their need in a seamless manner.
- The ‘ICICI Bank Niyo Bharat Payroll Card’ allows an individual to receive funds up to ₹1 lakh into the card account. It offers convenience and safety of digital banking to the blue-collar workforce while providing a state-of-the-art salary disbursement solution to the employers.

2.TRIFED and IFFDC ink MoU to work together for tribal livelihood generation

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative Ltd (IFFDC) to promote livelihood generation of tribal people.
- TRIFED is focusing its efforts on finding new ways to improve the lives and the livelihoods of the tribal people. As a part of its continued efforts, TRIFED has been partnering with like-minded organisations to create synergies together.

3.ICICI Bank launched ‘InstaFX’ mobile app

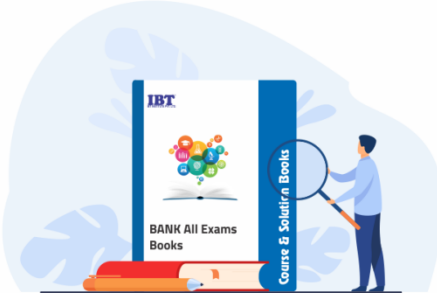
- ICICI Bank announced the launch of a new mobile application for authorised money changers to help customers of any bank get 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card' swiftly. Called 'InstaFX', the app enables the authorised money changers, who are partners of the Bank, to complete the KYC verification and validation of customers digitally and on a real-time basis.
- This facility significantly improves customer convenience as the 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card' gets activated swiftly within a few hours, as against the industry practice of up to two-days. ICICI Bank is the first bank in the country to offer such facility to money changers.

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4. Sensex Hits 50,000 for first Time, Nifty above 14,700, Led by Reliance Industries

- The S&P BSE Sensex moved above 50,000 mark for the first, led by gains in Reliance Industries after the market regulator SEBI approved Reliance Industries' Rs 24,713-crore deal to buy Future Group's retail assets, in a blow to Amazon's efforts to block the agreement.
- The BSE also granted its "no adverse observation" report after the deal clearance from the market regulator, with some riders. The Sensex rose as much as 335 points to hit an all-time high of 50,126.73 and Nifty 50 index also moved 14,700 mark for the first time.

5. World Economic Forum Released 16th Edition of Global Risks Report

- The World Economic Forum has released Global Risks Report 2021, the sixteenth edition of the Global Risks Report analysis which details the risks and consequences of increased inequality and societal fragmentation.
- Among the highest impact risks of the next decade, infectious diseases are in the top spot, followed by climate action failure and other environmental

risks; as well as weapons of mass destruction, livelihood crises, debt crises, and (information technology) IT infrastructure breakdown.”

- The report then analyzes a number of societal, economic and industrial divides which negatively impact cohesion and international cooperation before offering suggestions for increased resilience, drawing on lessons learned in global efforts to respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemi

SCIENCE TECH & DEFENCE

1. Petroleum & Natural Gas Ministry launched SAKSHAM campaign to spread awareness about green energy

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry today launched month-long mass awareness campaign 'SAKSHAM' to spread awareness about green and clean energy. The pan-India campaign will focus on adoption of cleaner fuels. The Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Tarun Kapoor launched the campaign in New Delhi.
- The campaign will spread awareness about seven key drivers that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently mentioned. They include moving towards a gas-based economy, cleaner use of fossil fuels, greater reliance on domestic sources to drive bio-fuels and increased use of electric vehicles.

2. Google Doodle honours the legacy of Basketball inventor Dr James Naismith

- Google Doodle had decided to honour the illustrious legacy of Dr James Naismith, a professor, who was also a physical educator, doctor and a coach, on Friday. In 1891, Dr Naismith invented the game of Basketball. He announced the game and wrote its original rules in the pages of a Springfield College newspaper, 'The Triangle'.
- The game, which has the most followed and watched sporting league around the world - NBA - has grown into a colossal phenomenon since then.
- Naismith, who did his bachelors in Physical Education from McGill University, was an instructor at the YMCA International Training College in Springfield, Massachusetts. The new instructor was given a task to engage his students and keep them away from chilling England winters. Thus, the game came into being with a soccer ball and ten rules, while being provided with two baskets.

3. U.S. to sanction Russian vessel building Nord Stream 2 Gas Pipeline in Baltic Sea

- A Russian ship tasked with laying pipes to complete construction of the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline will be placed under sanctions by the US, German officials said.
- "This is the announcement of a sanction of a Russian ship. We take note of the announcement with regret," a ministry spokesman told AFP, confirming a report in the Handelsblatt newspaper that Washington would make the decision official.
- Work on the 10-billion-euro (\$11 billion) pipeline resumed in German waters in December after being suspended for nearly a year because of the threat of US sanctions.
- Signed off by US President Donald Trump in late 2019, the measures threatened asset freezes and visa restrictions for companies involved in the construction.

4.DRDO hands over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to CRPF

- Defence Research and Development Organisation handed over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi-based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to CRPF in a ceremony held at CRPF Head Office in New Delhi.
- Director-General of CRPF Dr. A P Maheshwari flagged off the contingent of 21 bikes on the occasion. The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency health care providers. The bike ambulances will provide life-saving aid for evacuation of injured patients from low-intensity conflict areas.
- Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement.

5.Infosys gets Google Cloud Partner status for Specialisation in the data and analytics space

- Infosys said it had been accredited with the Google Cloud Partner Specialisation in the data and analytics space. It is among the top global system integrators to be accredited with this specialisation, claimed the company. Infosys has achieved this recognition by successfully demonstrating end-to-end capabilities on Google Cloud including data ingestion and warehousing on the cloud, as per the firm.
- The system integrator has showcased technical proficiency, robust methodology, strong industry expertise, and success in specialised data and analytics solutions and service areas. These data and analytics offerings, part of Infosys Cobalt, together with AI capabilities help migrate workloads to Google Cloud, modernise data landscapes, and optimise costs paving the way for AI and cloud-native digital transformation for enterprises, Infosys further said.

6.NITI Aayog releases 2nd edition of India Innovation Index-2020

- NITI Aayog today released the second edition of the India Innovation Index-2020 today. The index demonstrates the government's continued commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.
- While releasing the India Innovation Index-2020 in New Delhi, Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog Rajiv Kumar said, the index illustrates that India is on the right path and the states are endeavouring to improve their innovative ecosystem.
- In the India Innovation Index-2020, the States and Union Territories have been divided into 17 Major States, 10 North-East and Hill States and nine Union Territories and Small States for effectively comparing their performance.
- In the 2020 ranking, Karnataka retained its first position in the Major States category. Maharashtra moved one position higher and stood at 2nd spot while Tamil Nadu slid to 3rd position.

7.Cabinet approves MoU Between India, Uzbekistan for Cooperation In Solar Energy

- The Union Cabinet on 20th January, 2021 approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between India and Uzbekistan for cooperation in solar energy.
- The main area of work is to identify research, demonstration and pilot projects between the National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and the International Solar Energy Institute (ISEI), Uzbekistan in mutually identified areas including solar photovoltaic and storage technologies.
- The release said that based on mutual agreement, both parties would work for implementation and deployment of pilot project in International Solar Alliance (ISA) member countries.

8.Cabinet approves Rs 5,282-cr investment for 850 MW Ratle project on Chenab river

- The Union Cabinet approved a Rs 5281.94 crore investment for 850 megawatt (MW) Ratle hydropower project on Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir.
- This comes in the backdrop of India's plan to expedite strategically important hydropower projects in the union territory post its reorganization, as the National Democratic Alliance government plans to fully utilize its share of water under the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. Chenab flows from India into Pakistan.

9.Indian Railways Renames Howrah-Kalka Mail as Netaji Express

- Days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrates the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, the Indian Railways renamed one of its oldest trains, the Howrah-Kalka Mail, as the 'Netaji Express'.
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted: "Netaji's prakram had put India on the express route of freedom and development. I am thrilled to celebrate his anniversary with the introduction of 'Netaji Express'."
- Started in the 19th Century as one of the early commercial passenger train services in India, the Kalka mail has always enjoyed a steady patronage and popularity connecting Howrah with Kalka. It is said that Bose took this train from Gomoh in Bihar after he escaped from his house in Kolkata in 1941.

10.Five day Indo-French Air exercise "Ex Desert Knight-21" begins in Jodhpur

- Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force are conducting a bilateral Air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21 in Jodhpur.
- The French side will participate with Rafale, Airbus A-330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport, A-400M Tactical Transport aircraft and approximately 175 personnel. The Indian Air Force aircraft participating in the exercise will include Rafale, Mirage 2000, Sukhoi-30 MKI among other aircraft.
- The exercise marks an important milestone in the series of engagements between the two Air forces. It is unique as it includes fielding of Rafale aircraft by both sides and is indicative of the growing interaction between the two premier Air Forces.

Books and Awards

1.Biswajit Chatterjee awarded 'Indian Personality of the Year' at IFFI

- Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Prakash Javadekar, announced a new 'Indian Personality of the Year' award, which he announced was being conferred upon veteran actor, director and singer Biswajit Chatterjee.
- Chatterjee will be presented the award in March, along with winners of the National Film Awards.
- IFFI also chose Bangladesh as the country in focus for this year.
- To mark the 100th birth anniversary of Bangladesh's first president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, India and Bangladesh will be co-producing a film titled 'Bangabandhu'.
- The 'Lifetime Achievement' this year was given to Italian cinematographer Vittorio Storaro.

2.Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant releases book 'Manohar Parrikar - Off the Record'

- Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant released a book 'Manohar Parrikar- Off the Record' at a function organized at Institute Menezes Braganza hall in the city. The book has been written by senior journalist Waman Subha Prabhu.
- The book 'Manohar Parrikar- Off the Record' is a collection of memories of Mr. Prabhu who happened to be with late Parrikar during the journey of his life. In the book the author has endeavored to narrate multi-faceted personality of late Manohar Parrikar. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, while speaking, said Late Manohar Parrikar was a great visionary who had dreamt to serve Goa.

3.Mihir Dalal's book on Flipkart wins Gaja Capital's book prize

- Mihir Dalal won the Gaja Capital Business Book Prize 2020 for his debut book, Big Billion Startup: The Untold Flipkart Story.
- He was chosen from a shortlist of six books, including works by Sunil Munjal, Rahul Chandra, Tamal Bandyopadhyay, T.N. Hari, M.S. Subramanian and Katherine Eban.
- Established by the equity firm Gaja Capital last year, the Gaja Business Book Prize seeks to recognize business writing. With prize money of ₹15 lakh for the winner, it is the biggest business book prize in the country.
- Announcing the 2020 winner virtually, Gopal Jain, co-founder and managing partner of Gaja Capital, spoke of the need to chronicle India's growth story for the world.

SPORTS

1.Varun Kapur, Samiya Imad Farooqui and 4 other Indians shuttlers confirm Top-10 spots in latest world junior rankings of BWF

- In badminton, promising Indian shuttlers Varun Kapur and Samiya Imad Farooqui along with four other Indians have confirmed Top-10 spots in the latest world junior rankings of Badminton World Federation (BWF).
- Starting 2021 on a high, Varun moved four places ahead in the men's rankings while Samiya took a six-spot jump as the youngsters achieved their career-best junior rankings and became World No. 2.
- Varun had a great run last year as he picked his sixth junior title when he won the XII Portuguese International-2020 in November. While the 17-year-old Hyderabad, a U-15 Asian Badminton Championship winner, Samiya has been one of the consistent performers at the junior circuit.

2.Sporting facilities to be named after renowned athletes

- Sports Ministry has decided to name all upcoming and upgraded sporting facilities of the Sports Authority of India, after renowned athletes, who have contributed to sports in India. In the first leg, the newly built air-conditioned wrestling hall and the learners swimming pool in the National Centre of

Excellence, NOCE in Lucknow, the 100-bedded hostel in NCOE Bhopal, the multipurpose hall and Girls' hostel in NCOE Sonapat will be named after local star sportspersons.

- Speaking about the decision, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said, to build a sports culture in the country, it is important that our sportspersons get the honour that they deserve. He said, the government is already providing all support to present and even past athletes to ensure that they have a life of comfort and dignity. Acknowledging their contribution to sports by naming sporting facilities after them is yet another endeavour of the Government to strengthen its commitment to sportspersons.

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3. Carolina Marin wins Yonex Thailand Open badminton tournament 2021

- Reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin bolstered her chances of defending in Tokyo later this year after claiming the Thailand Open in Bangkok Sunday over top seed Tai Tzu-ying.
- Despite having a cold, fourth seed Viktor Axelsen of Denmark was electric in the men's final against Hong Kong's Angus Long, ranked eighth, claiming the title in straight sets.
- Spaniard Marin, 27, a former world number one, was an imposing force with razor-sharp smashes, clever network and an unmatched level of aggression and agility.
- She screamed in delight as she won match point in the second set after steam-rolling her 26-year-old opponent from Taiwan 21-9, 21-16 in 42 minutes.

4. Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju gets additional charge of AYUSH Ministry

- Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has been temporarily assigned the charge of the Ministry of AYUSH, according to a Rashtrapati

Bhavan communique issued on Tuesday. The move was necessitated as Shripad Yesso Naik, the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Goa.

- Shripad Yesso Naik (68) was admitted to the hospital on January 12 after he met with an accident while on his way back to Goa from Karnataka.

5.JSW Sports signs Rishabh Pant, to manage commercial interests and marketing rights

- JSW Sports, the sports arm of the JSW Group conglomerate, on Wednesday announced the addition of India's star wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant to its growing talent management roster.
- The multi-year association between the two parties will see JSW Sports manage all commercial interests and marketing rights of the 23-year-old cricketer, who most recently played a starring role in India's magnificent Test series win in Australia.

OBITUARIES

1.Former Union minister Kamal Morarka passed away at the age of 74

- Kamal Morarka, a former Minister in the Chandra Shekhar government and ex-Rajya Sabha MP from Rajasthan, has passed away after a brief illness. The 74-year-old leader, a businessman who was also a former BCCI vice president, breathed his last. He was 74.
- "He was fine till around 5 pm today, but passed away shortly afterwards owing to a heart attack," said Rajendra Sharma, one of Morarka's aides.
- Rajkumar Sharma, MLA from Nawalgarh in Rajasthan, tweeted, "Shocked at the demise of former Union Minister and famous industrialist of Nawalgarh, Shri Kamal Morarka ji. This is irreparable damage to all of us."

2.Legendary classical musician Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan passed away at 89

- Renowned Indian classical musician Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan passed away at the age of 89 on Sunday afternoon at his residence here, his family said.
- Khan's daughter-in-law Namrata Gupta Khan told that the veteran breathed his last at 12.37 pm at his Bandra home.
- "He was fine in the morning... but during his massage he vomited. His eyes were shut and he was breathing slowly. I tried connecting to doctors but by the time they came, he had already died," Namrata said.

- She said the family is in shock due to Khan's sudden demise as he was keeping well. The musician was going to turn 90 on March 3.
- Khan had suffered a brain stroke in 2019 that left one side of his body paralysed.

3. Dr V Shanta, renowned oncologist and pioneer in cancer care, passed away in Chennai at 93

- Chennai, Veteran oncologist V. Shanta who headed the Cancer Institute (WIA) here, popularly known as Adyar Cancer Institute died at a private hospital on Tuesday early morning.
- A Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri and Ramon Magsaysay awardee Shanta, 93 was admitted to a private hospital on Monday night as she was unwell.

4. Former Arunachal Pradesh Governor Mata Prasad Died At 95

- Former Arunachal Pradesh Governor Mata Prasad died following multi-organ failure at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS). He was 95 years old.
- He was admitted to the hospital last evening after being transferred from a private hospital, an official said.
- Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu deeply mourned the death of Mata Prasad.

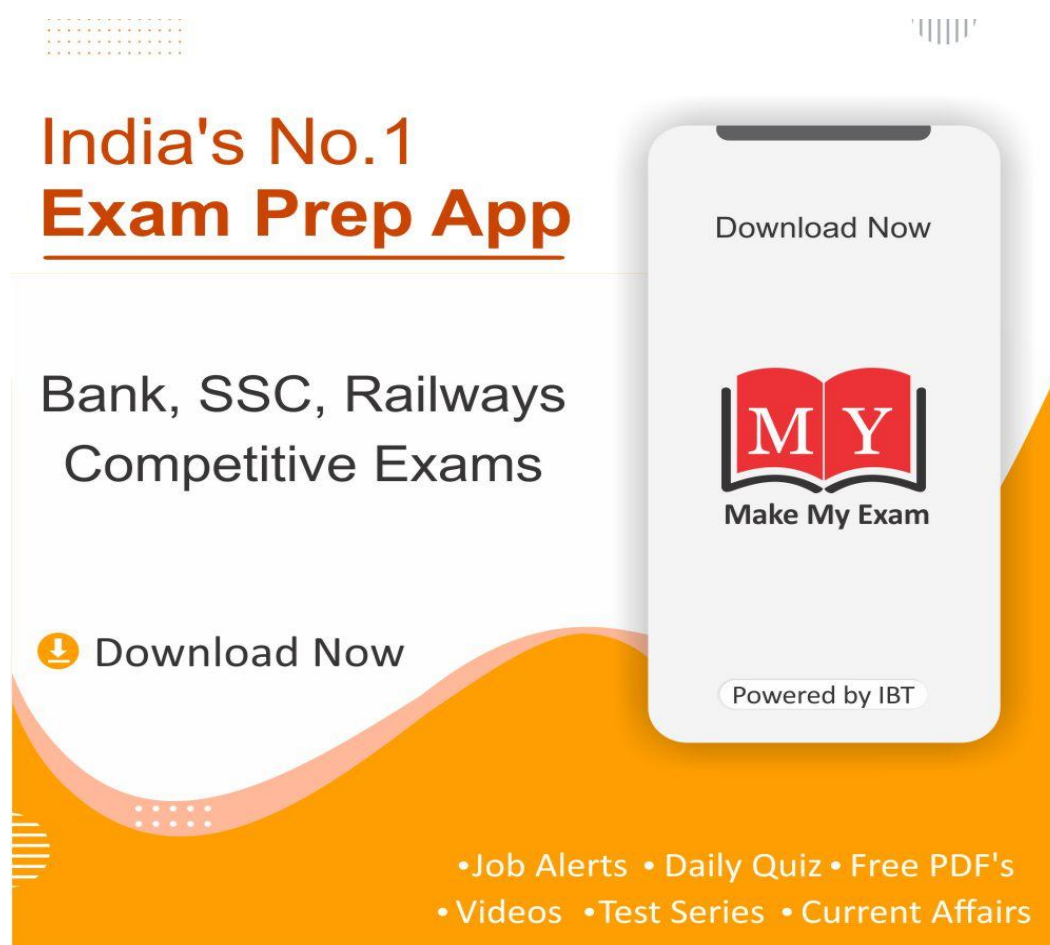
5. Malayalam actor Unnikrishnan Namboothiri passed away at 98

- Veteran actor Unnikrishnan Namboothiri on Wednesday passed away at a private hospital in Kannur. He was 98.
- Unnikrishnan had tested positive for COVID-19 recently. He was receiving treatment for the same at the intensive care unit of a private hospital. On Tuesday, he was sent home after his COVID-test came back negative. However, on Wednesday, his health deteriorated and he was taken back to the hospital, where he breathed his last.
- Unnikrishnan made his acting debut with Desadanam in 1996. However, he became a household name among the Malayalam film audience for his performance as a witty grandfather in Kalyanaraman. He had also played a pivotal role in Kamal Haasan's hit comedy-drama, Pammal K Sambandam.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Guru Gobind Singh Ji's 354th birth anniversary celebrated on 20 January, 2021


- Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti will be celebrated on January 20. It marks the 354th birth anniversary of the tenth guru of Sikhism- Guru Gobind Singh Ji and is considered as one of the most auspicious festivals among Sikhs.
- Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born on the Saptami Tithi, Shukla Paksha (also known as the waxing phase of the Moon) in the Paush month in 1666. The day, which is also known as Prakash Parv or Guru Gobind Singh Parkash Utsav, is celebrated every year either in December or January in accordance with the Nanakshahi calendar.



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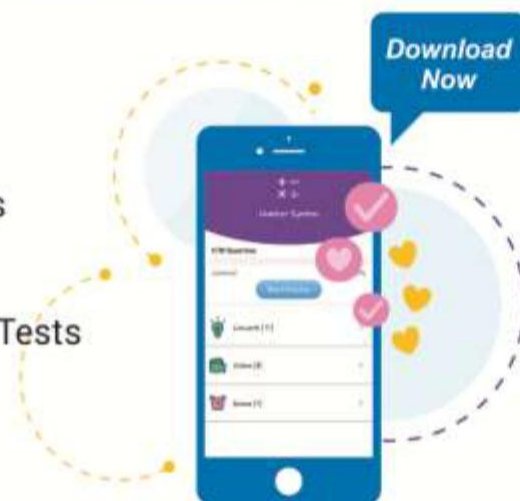
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