

Weekly Current Affairs

13 Dec – 19 Dec, 2020

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NATIONAL NEWS

1. Indian Embassy in Beijing launches Bollywood 'cinemaSCOpe' series for SCO diplomats

- Indian Embassy in Beijing launched a movie series "cinemaSCOpe" exclusively for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, SCO in which more than two dozen Indian films dubbed in Russian, will be screened on a monthly basis. The event was jointly inaugurated by Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri and SCO Secretary General Vladimir Norov in a cheerful atmosphere.
- India continued its diplomatic outreach to the SCO countries riding on the popularity of Indian cinema in the region. The movie screening began with 'Three Idiots' on Saturday and will continue till India's chairmanship of the SCO 'Council of Heads of State' meeting in 2023.

2. Maharashtra govt all set to launch 'MahaSharad' platform

- Maharashtra's Department of Social Justice is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through Maha Sharad Digital Platform today to coincide with NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 80th birthday. It will be available on Play Store by March 2021.
- Maharashtra System for Health and Rehabilitation Assistance" or MahaSharad platform has been created to provide various devices to persons with disabilities free of cost through the Commissionerate for persons with Disability.

3. NITI Aayog releases a white paper "Vision2035 Public Health Surveillance in India"

- NITI Aayog today released a white paper Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India. The white paper lays out India's vision for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.
- It also spells out the need for expanded referral networks and enhanced laboratory capacity. The building blocks for this vision are an interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states.

4. 9th edition of Sustainable Mountain Development Summit begins in Dehradun

- The ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) in Dehradun has begun today. The theme for this year is Emerging

Pathways for Building a Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration.

- The summit will focus on the overall objective of building pathways toward a resilient and sustainable mountain economy in the context of a post COVID-19 scenario and Climate Change.

5. Maharashtra BJYM starts Atmanirbhar Bharat Guidance Centre

- In a bid to promote the Centre's Atma Nirbhar programme, the Maharashtra unit of Bhartiya Janta Yuva Morcha has started the Atmanirbhar Bharat Guidance Centre.
- Addressing the inaugural ceremony in Mumbai, BJP leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, the Rs. 20 lakh crore Atma Nirbhar package has been announced by the Narendra Modi government with the twin objectives.
- He explained that the first objective was to reduce the distress caused by COVID-19 pandemic by helping the weaker sections get foodgrains and monetary support directly into their bank accounts.
- The second objective is to develop a futuristic India, which is not only self-reliant but also a global manufacturing hub.

6. India and Bangladesh sign 7 MoUs and agreements in virtual summit

- India and Bangladesh signed seven MoUs and agreements during the virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today.
- The agreements include a framework of understanding in Hydrocarbon sector, framework agreement on High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP), protocol on transborder elephant conservation, an MoU on the supply of equipment and improvement of Garbage and solid waste disposal, MoU in the field of agriculture, an MoU between National Museum Delhi and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial museum, Dhaka and terms of reference for India Bangladesh CEO forum.
- The agreements and MoUs were signed in Dhaka by the High Commissioner of India Vikram Doraiswami on behalf of India and officials of Bangladesh.

7. India contributes USD 1 million to WADA to support clean sport

- Taking a step further to ensure an atmosphere of clean sport globally, India has pledged a sum of USD 1 million to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) towards the global agency's scientific research budget, which will allow WADA to develop innovative anti-doping testing and detection methods. The money will also be used to further strengthen WADA's independent Investigations and Intelligence Department.

- The decision to build this corpus was made at WADA's Fifth World Conference on Doping in Sport held in Katowice, Poland in 2019. This contribution is over and above the annual contribution made to WADA's core budget by India.

8.NHAI Chairman Sukhbir Singh Sandhu gets six months extension

- Sukhbir Singh Sandhu has been given six months extension as the chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), a Personnel Ministry order issued on Thursday said. Sandhu is a 1988-batch IAS officer of Uttarakhand cadre.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the extension in central deputation tenure of Sandhu, chairman, NHAI, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, for a period of six months beyond January 21, 2021, i.e. up to July 21, 2021, it said.

9. Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal addresses CII's Session on Post-Brexit UK and India

- Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal today addressed CII's Session on Post-Brexit UK and India, along with Secretary of State for International Trade for the UK, Ms Liz Truss.
- Mr Goyal said, India is excited to be hosting UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson as chief guest on the 71st Republic Day Celebrations, next year. He said, this will be a turning point in our historical relationship.
- Mr Goyal hoped that the early harvest proposition of India, within the framework of a larger Free Trade Agreement, which we are working towards, will be accepted by the UK. He said, the early harvest proposition will help us grab the low hanging fruits, so that both sides can enjoy the taste of the wonderful fruits.

10. NCB India and National Narcotics Board BNN of Indonesia conduct 4th Bilateral JWG meeting

- Fourth Bilateral Joint Working Group, JWG meeting between the Narcotics Control Bureau NCB India and the National Narcotics Board BNN, Indonesia was held today. The Indian delegation was led by Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau, Rakesh Asthana and the Indonesian delegation was led by Deputy of Legal Affairs and Cooperation, National Narcotic Board of Indonesia, Puji Sarwono.
- Mr Asthana highlighted issues particularly the trafficking of Heroin and Amphetamine Type Stimulant ATS in the country through land and maritime routes originating from the Golden Triangle.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. Israel establishes diplomatic ties with Bhutan

- Israel has established diplomatic relations with Bhutan. In a statement, Israeli foreign ministry said that the agreement follows several years of secret contacts between Israel and Bhutan with the aim of establishing relations.
- The foreign ministry said that a signing ceremony was held between the Israeli and Bhutanese ambassadors to India yesterday. It also added that the countries agreed to formulate a joint work plan in the areas of water management, agriculture, healthcare and other areas.



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2. U.K, EU say talks will continue on post-Brexit trade deal

Throwing overboard Sunday's self-imposed deadline, the European Union and Britain said they will "go the extra mile" to clinch a post-Brexit trade agreement that would avert New Year's chaos and cost for cross-border commerce.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had set Sunday as the deadline for a breakthrough or breakdown in negotiations. But they stepped back from the brink because there was too much at stake not to make an ultimate push.

3. UNESCO to launch international prize in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

- The UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of ‘creative economy’ in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Starting November 2021, the dollar 50 thousand award will be given away once in two years for global economic initiatives of the youth.
- UNESCO has declared 2021 as ‘International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development’

4. British PM invites Prime Minister Modi to attend UK hosted G-7 summit next year

- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has invited India to attend G7 Summit next year. Mr Johnson has sent a letter inviting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the summit. UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab called on Mr Modi and handed over the letter in New Delhi.
- Prime Minister Modi has accepted the invitation. Following his bilateral meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Mr Raab said, he is pleased to extend the invite to Prime Minister Modi to join the UK-hosted G7 summit next year.

5. India slips two spot to rank 131 in UN’s human development index

- India slipped two spots to rank 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 human development index, a report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said. Human Development Index is the measure of a nation’s health, education, and standards of living.
- While India is ranked 131, its neighbours Bhutan is ranked 129, Bangladesh 133, Nepal 142, and Pakistan 154, the report said. India had ranked 129 in 2018 in the index.

6. Indian Railways issues draft National Rail Plan to create capacity by 2030

- In an endeavour to address the inadequacies of capacity constraints and improve its modal share in the total freight ecosystem of the country, Indian Railways has come up with a Draft National Rail Plan.
- A long term strategic plan called the National Rail Plan has been developed to plan infrastructural capacity enhancement along with strategies to increase modal share of the Railways. It will be a common platform for all future infrastructural, business and financial planning of the Railways. This plan is being circulated among various Ministries for their views now. Railways aims to finalise the final plan by January 2021.

New Appointments and Person in News

1. RBI re-appoints Uday Kotak as MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank

- RBI Approves re-Appointment Of Uday Kotak As MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank
- The Reserve Bank of India on Monday approved re-appointment of Kotak Mahindra Bank's founder Uday Kotak as managing director and chief executive officer of the bank for a period of three years with effect from January 1, 2021, Kotak Mahindra Bank said in a stock exchange filing.
- The central bank has also approved re-appointment of Prakash Apte as part-time chairman and Dipak Gupta as joint managing director.

2. Kylie Jenner tops Forbes' list of highest-paid celebrities of 2020

- American media personality and reality TV star Kylie Jenner has been crowned the highest-paid celebrity of 2020 by Forbes.
- The top-earning stars in the world earned a combined of \$6.1 billion in 2020 with Kylie Jenner and Kanye West at the top of the list. Setting aside Kylie's history with Forbes, the financial experts there calculated her earning this year to be at \$590 million after she sold a majority of her beauty brand's stake to Coty Inc.
- Ranked at number 2 on the list by making \$170 million was American rapper and record producer Kanye West, who is also coincidentally Kylie's brother-in-law.

3. Prasar Bharati CEO elected as vice president of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union

- Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati was on December 17 elected as the vice president of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, one of the largest broadcasting associations in the world, a Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ministry statement said.
- The Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union was formed in 1964 as a professional association of broadcasting organisations with over 286 members in 57 countries and regions, reaching the potential population of about three billion people.
- Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar congratulated Vempati on his election and thanked all ABU members who voted in favour of India.

BANKING

1. EXIM Bank and SIDBI plan to set up an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF).

- EXIM Bank and SIDBI plan to set up an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) in partnership.
- The fund will be set up to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by providing equity and loans.
- In the Budget for Financial Year 2020-21, the government announced that a fund would be set up by SIDBI and EXIM Bank to support SMEs in pharmaceuticals, auto components and other sectors.
- The aim of the scheme is to find Indian enterprises currently underperforming but having the potential to grow.

2. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to start Pre- Budget consultations from tomorrow

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will start her Pre- Budget consultations with different stakeholder Groups from December 14 in New Delhi. The meetings will be held virtually in connection with the forthcoming General Budget 2021-22.
- The Finance Ministry said, Ms Sitharaman will be holding her 1st Pre-Budget consultations with top industrialists tomorrow spread over morning and afternoon sessions.

3. Department of Posts & India Post Payments Bank unveil new digital payment app 'DakPay'

- Department of Posts and India Post Payments Bank today unveiled a new digital payment app DakPay.
- The App is launched as part of its ongoing efforts to provide Digital Financial inclusion at the last mile across India.
- DakPay is not just a digital payment app but a suite of digital financial and assisted banking services provided by India Post and IPPB through the trusted Postal network across the nation to cater to the financial needs of various sections of the society.

4. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs 23rd Meeting of FSDC through video conference

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the 23rd Meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council, FSDC through video conference in New Delhi.

- The meeting reviewed the major macro-economic developments and Financial Stability issues with special reference to vulnerability related issues.
- It noted that the policy measures taken by the Government and the financial sector regulatory authorities have ensured faster economic recovery in India as reflected in the reduced contraction of GDP in second quarter of 2020-21.


5. Crisil revises GDP forecast to -7.7% for fiscal 2021

- India's fiscal 2021 real gross domestic product (GDP) is now expected to contract 7.7 per cent compared with a contraction of 9 per cent forecast in September, according to Crisil.
- The credit rating agency reasoned that a faster-than-expected revival in activity in the second quarter, which continues into the festival season, is one of the reasons for the revision.

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6. Edelweiss General Insurance launches new API gateway

- This new platform will enable insurer's distributors to speedily integrate available and new products and services
- EGI has always aimed to provide insight based, simple and innovative solutions that provide tangible value to customers, the insurer said
- Edelweiss General Insurance (EGI) has recently launched open API (Application Programming Interface) gateway, a first of its kind, to facilitate complete digital collaboration with its business partners.
- With this gateway, EGI's authorised partners can integrate their systems with the company's robust technology platform. It will help further reinforce EGI's linkages with both customers and partners.
- This new platform will enable insurer's distributors to speedily integrate available and new products and services. It also aims to lower the cost of

integration and retrieve information such as product premium, policy details etc., in real-time

7. CCEA approves revised cost estimate of North-East Region Power System Improvement Project

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, CCEA today approved revised cost estimate of North Eastern Region Power System Improvement Project for six States for strengthening of the Intra-State Transmission and Distribution Systems.
- Mr Javadekar said, CCEA has also approved assistance of Rs. 3,500 crore for sugarcane farmers.
- He said, Cabinet has taken the decision to help farmers directly by depositing money of subsidy into their accounts.
- The subsidy will be given on 60 lakh tonnes of sugar exports at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per tonne.

8. S&P revises India's GDP contraction forecast in FY21 to 7.7%

- S&P Global Ratings (previously Standard & Poor's) has raised India's GDP growth projection for the FY21 (2020-21) to – 7.7 per cent from – 9 per cent estimated earlier.
- The lower contraction rate is based on rising demand and falling COVID infection rates.
- The US-based S&P rating agency has projected India's growth to rebound to 10 per cent in the next fiscal, i.e. 2021-22 (FY22).

9. World Bank Signs \$400 Million Project to Protect India's Poor and vulnerable people from COVID-19

- The Government of India and the World Bank today signed a \$400 million project to support India's efforts at providing social assistance to the poor and vulnerable households, severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This is the second operation in a programmatic series of two.
- The first operation of \$750 million was approved in May 2020. It enabled immediate cash transfers to about 320 million individual bank accounts identified through pre-existing national social protection schemes under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) and additional food rations for about 800 million individuals.

10. FY21 GDP to contract at 7.4% on better recovery: SBI report

- India's GDP growth is expected to be at (-) 7.4 per cent in FY21 on better than projected recovery, said a SBI research report, upgrading its earlier forecast of (-) 10.9 per cent. The report also believes that it would take

seven quarters from the fourth quarter of FY21 for GDP to reach the pre-pandemic level in nominal terms.

- "We now expect GDP decline for the full year (FY21) to be in single digits at 7.4 per cent (compared to our earlier prediction of (–) 10.9 per cent), aligned with RBI and markets' revised forecasts post Q2," SBI said in its research report - Ecowrap.

SCIENCE TECH & DEFENCE

1. 1st service of Pawan Hans MI 17 Helicopter between Kargil to Srinagar starts

- In Kargil, the first service of Pawan Hans MI 17 Helicopter between Kargil to Srinagar started on December 13 and lifted 13 passengers from Kargil to Srinagar and 14 from Srinagar to Kargil.
- The service will ease the issue of transportation during the winter season.
- The fare of this helicopter service is Rs 9,000 per passenger and anyone willing to avail the service can contact the Liaison officer Naib Tehsildar Kargil.

2.ISRO to launch communication satellite CMS-01 on December 17

- The launch of communication satellite CMS-01 onboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C50), is scheduled on December 17 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, the Indian Space Research Organisation
- "PSLV-C50, which is the 52nd mission of PSLV, will launch CMS-01 from the Second Launch Pad (SLP) of Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota. The launch is tentatively scheduled at 15:41 Hrs IST on December 17, 2020 subject to weather conditions," the space agency said.

3. Bombay Stock Exchange launches e-agricultural spot market platform

- Diversified exchange BSE has launched an electronic spot platform for agricultural commodities - "BSE E-Agricultural Markets Ltd. (BEAM)" - through its subsidiary BSE Investments.
- "The platform facilitates spot agricultural commodities transactions across value chain consisting of producers, intermediaries, ancillary services and consumers. The platform will commence beta operations effective from December 11, 2020," the exchange said in a statement.

4. GRSE Kolkata launches 'Himgiri', its 1st Ship of Project 17A

- Himgiri, which is the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata was launched today.

- She made her first contact with the waters of Hoogly River
- In keeping with Naval traditions, Madhulika Rawat, spouse of the CDS launched the ship to the chanting of invocations from the Atharva Veda.
- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built with enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements.

5. Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi Palaniswamy launches 2,000 mini-clinics

- CM of Tamil Nadu launches, 2,000 mini-clinics have been launched today.
- Chief minister Edappadi Palaniswamy inaugurated them at a function held in Chennai Monday morning.
- He said, these clinics will serve the poorest of the poor even in the remotest parts of the state.
- AIR Chennai correspondent reports, the new health facilities in the state have been named as the “Amma Mini-Clinics,”

6. Ola to invest Rs.2,400 crore to set up largest e-scooter factory in the world

- It has signed a memorandum of understanding with the government of Tamil Nadu in India to set up what it claims would be the “world’s largest scooter manufacturing facility” in the South Indian state as the Indian ride-hailing firm begins a new push with electric vehicles.
- The Soft Bank-backed Indian ride-hailing firm said it will invest about \$327 million in setting up the factory, which it says would create almost 10,000 jobs and have an initial capacity to produce 2 million electric vehicles in a year.

7. Norway Research Institute signs MoU with Clean Ganga Mission

- Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research has signed an MoU with cGanga, a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India.
- On this occasion, Norwegian Diplomat in India Karina Asbjørnsen, said, Norway intends to deepen relationship with India especially in prevention of climate change and conservation of environment.
- Secretary Jal Shakti Ministry UP Singh explained several initiatives in waste water management and the need to develop further business modules by cGanga and their Norwegian counterpart.

8. Indian Coast Guard commissions interceptor boat at Surat’s Hazira Port

- An indigenously-built interceptor boat joined the Indian Coast Guard on Tuesday at a function in Hazira in Surat district. The interceptor boat C-454, built by Larsen and Toubro at its Hazira plant, will operate from Gujarat

under the control of the Commander Coast Guard Region (North-West) of the ICG, a defence release said. It was commissioned by Surat Police Commissioner Ajay Tomar in presence of Commander ICG (NW) Inspector General Rakesh Pal and other officials.

- The interceptor boat will operate from Gujarat under administrative and operational control of the Commander Coast Guard Region (NW) and is part of ongoing efforts of Indian Coast Guard to strengthen coastal security of Gujarat maritime borders, the release further informed.

9. ISRO sets up dedicated control centre "NETRA" for Space Situational Awareness

- A dedicated control centre for Space Situational Awareness (SSA) activities in the country, aimed at monitoring, tracking and protecting India's space assets, has been set up here, the Indian Space Research Organisation said on Wednesday. "ISRO SSA Control Centre, 'NETRA', is set up within the ISTRAC campus at Peenya.
- The control centre is envisaged to function as a hub of all SSA activities within India," the space agency said.
- The Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management (DSSAM) engages in evolving improved operational mechanisms to protect Indian space assets through effective coordination amongst ISRO/DOS Centres, other space agencies and international bodies, it said.

10. NASA selects Indian-American Raja Chari as commander of SpaceX Crew-3 mission

- NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) have selected Indian-American Raja Chari to be the Commander of the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station.
- Raja Chari, 43, is a colonel in the US Air Force. He will be the commander of SpaceX Crew-3 mission while Nasa's Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA's Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist. This mission is expected to be launched next year.

11. Defence Acquisition Council approves proposals worth Rs 27,000 crore to procure equipment from domestic industry

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting, headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, approved proposals to procure equipment worth Rs 27,000 crore from the domestic industry.
- DAC approved Capital Acquisition proposals of various weapons, platforms, equipment and systems required by the Indian Army, the Navy and Air Force at an approximate overall cost of Rs 28,000 crore.

- This was the first meeting of the Council under the new regime of Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 and this will give a boost to the Make in India and Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiatives of the Government.
- Acquisition proposals approved include the DRDO designed and developed Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems for the Indian Air Force, Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels for the Indian Navy and Modular Bridges for the Indian Army.

Books and Awards

1. Dr. Carolina becomes first non-Indian to receive the Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians

- The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 was awarded to Dr. Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony on 9th December 2020.
- The prize awarded annually to a researcher from a developing country funded by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India in collaboration with ICTP (International Centre for Theoretical Physics), and the International Mathematical Union was given for her outstanding work in algebraic geometry. Her work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.
- Dr. Araujo, who is Vice President of the Committee for Women in Mathematics at the International Mathematical Union, is the first non-Indian to receive this prize and will be a role model for all women.

2. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla releases book on 19th anniversary of Parliament attack

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla released a book on occasion of 19th anniversary of the Parliament attack.
- He released the book 'The Shaurya Unbound' (English Version) and 'Samundar Samawe Boond Mein' (Hindi Version).
- A series of books has been planned to chronicle the life stories of CRPF bravehearts.
- The first book in this series is a collection of 13 most exemplary acts of valour of the force personnel.

3. SAIL gets Golden Peacock Environment Management Award 2020

- Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 in the Steel Sector by the Institute of Directors.

- The award was conferred on SAIL in a virtual award presentation ceremony held on December 15, 2020.
- “SAIL has been the winner of this award for successive two years and this bears testimony to the efforts made by the company for sustainable and environmentally responsible steel making.

4. Govt launches e-booklet 'Putting Farmers First'

- As farmers intensified their protest seeking repeal of three farm laws, the government issued an e-booklet highlighting the success stories of farmers who have benefited from contract farming after enactment of these legislations.
- In the 100-page e-booklet 'Putting Farmers First', the government made clear the truth" about the farm reforms and has mentioned.
- It also asserted that reforms in the farm sector were undertaken step by step in the last six years keeping in mind the needs of farmers.
- Farmers have been protesting at various border points of Delhi for three weeks against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

SPORTS

1. Max Verstappen wins F1 season finale in flawless drive at Abu Dhabi GP

- After a gruelling 17-race season, Formula One came to a close with Max Verstappen's win at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and Lewis Hamilton wanting to complete one final piece of business before Christmas.
- The world champion has yet to renew his contract with Mercedes but the deal that will take the sport's most successful driver into 2021 is expected to be completed in the next two weeks.

2 Rourkela gears up to host FIH Men's Hockey World Cup India 2023

- After the stupendous success of Odisha Men's Hockey World Cup in 2018 and the scale at which it was hosted, FIH had announced last year that the 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup will be hosted in Odisha, for a second consecutive time, at two venues, Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.
- After the Olympics, the Hockey World Cup is the most important tournament in hockey and there is already excitement galore amongst hockey lovers especially from Sundergarh and Rourkela region.

3. Sunrisers Hyderabad appoint Tom Moody as director of cricket

- Australia cricketer-turned-coach Tom Moody was on Tuesday appointed as the director of cricket by IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad.
- The 55-year-old Australian was in charge of SRH for seven years till the 2019 season, guiding the team to IPL the title in 2016 before he was replaced by England's World Cup-winning coach Trevor Bayliss in July last year.

4. Robert Lewandowski and Lucy Bronze win best FIFA players Award For 2020

- Robert Lewandowski has been named the Best FIFA Men's Player of the Year for 2020, with the Bayern Munich star beating Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to the coveted prize.
- While Lucy Bronze was named The Best FIFA Women's Player of the Year. Bronze returned home to England with Manchester City this year after starring for Lyon last season.
- Poland and FC Bayern Munchen striker Lewandowski was named The Best FIFA Men's Player for the first time in his career. Likewise, defender Bronze is also a maiden recipient of The Best FIFA Women's Player Award after rounding off an impeccable spell with Olympique Lyonnaise in style before returning to England to play for Manchester City WFC.

OBITUARIES

1. Renowned Sanskrit scholar Govindacharya passes away at the age of 85

- Renowned Sanskrit scholar Vidyavachaspati Bannanje Govindacharya died at the age of 85 at his residence at Ambalpady in Udupi on December 13 due to age related illness, family sources said.
- He was well-versed in Veda Bhashya, Upanishad Bhashya, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas and has written commentaries on Veda Suktas, Upanishads, Shata Rudriya, Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and Gita Bhashya.
- He had authored around 150 books and translated several texts from Sanskrit to Kannada

2. Chuck Yeager, The First Man to Travel Faster Than Speed of Sound, Dies at 97

- Chuck Yeager, the first person to travel at a speed faster than the speed of sound, has passed away at the age of 97.
- "It is profound sorrow, I must tell you that my life love General Chuck Yeager passed just before 9pm ET," Victoria Yeager tweeted on her husband's account on Tuesday.

3. Eswatini Prime Minister Ambrose Dlamini dies of COVID-19 at the age of 55

- Eswatini Prime Minister Ambrose Dlamini, who was undergoing treatment for coronavirus in neighbouring South Africa, has died at 55.
- The Prime Minister of Africa's last absolute monarchy Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, was moved to South Africa on December 1, a fortnight after testing positive for COVID-19, reportedly because of better healthcare facilities here.
- Dlamini's death was announced by the government of Eswatini

4. Former Australian Test cricketer all-rounder Eric Freeman dies at 76

- Former Australia Test all-rounder Eric Freeman has passed away at the age of 76.
- Freeman became Australia's 244th men's Test cricketer when he made his debut against India at the Gabba in 1968, removing both openers in the tourist's first innings with his right-arm fast-mediums.
- His finest series in the baggy green came against the West Indies in 1968-69, where he scored 183 runs at 30.50 - including two powerful half-centuries - and took 13 wickets at 30.07. He went on to play 11 Tests for Australia in which he scored 345 runs and scalped 34 wickets.

5. Former BJP MP Satyadev Singh dies at hospital after recovering from COVID-19

- Former BJP MP and senior party leader Satyadev Singh, who had recently recovered from COVID-19, died during treatment at a hospital in Gurgaon, his family.
- After testing negative for coronavirus, Singh was still undergoing treatment at the hospital, the family said.
- Satyadev Singh was elected as Bhartiya Lokdal MP from Gonda in 1977 and was BJP MP from Balrampur in 1991 and 1996.
- He was also the national president of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha between 1980 and 1985.
- Singh was currently the state president of BJP discipline committee and a member of BJP national executive.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. National Energy Conservation Day: 14 December

- Every year, December 14 is celebrated as Energy Conservation Day to raise awareness on the importance of energy conservation for the present and future generations. The conservation of energy is an important step that needs to be taken to ensure that the coming generations live in a brighter tomorrow.

- Energy conservation emphasises the judicious use of energy to minimise wastage and to save sources for the future. Energy conservation also advocates the importance of non-renewable resources.

2. Bangladesh observes ‘Martyred Intellectuals Day’ to mark brutality’ by Pakistani forces on 14th december

- Bangladesh is observing the Martyred Intellectuals Day to mark the day of brutality when Pakistani forces killed hundreds of intellectuals including teachers, doctors, journalists and others in Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh in 1971.
- On 14 December 1971, just two days before Bangladesh got liberation, the Pakistani occupation forces with the help of their local collaborators named Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams, went on a torture and killing spree of the most prominent intellectuals of the country.

3. Nation Observes 49th Vijay Diwas on 16 December

- In India, Vijay Diwas (also called Victory Day) is celebrated every year on December 16.
- The country is celebrating the 49th Vijay Diwas in 2020.
- Vijay Diwas is observed to commemorate the service, valour, and sacrifices of the gallant men of the Indian Armed Forces’ victory over Pakistan in 1971 war.
- On 16 December 1971, the Indian Armed Forces won the 13-day long decisive war against the Pakistan Army and state for the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

4. International Migrants Day 2020: 18 December

- International Migrants Day is a global event observed on December 18. The day recognises the importance of protecting the rights and dignity of migrants around the world.
- Throughout history, humans have migrated from place to place in search of a better life and a promise of the future. The migrants arrive at new places and enrich the existing communities. They become a part of the community and adapt its various traditions and add their own flavour to it, which results in a beautiful diversity.

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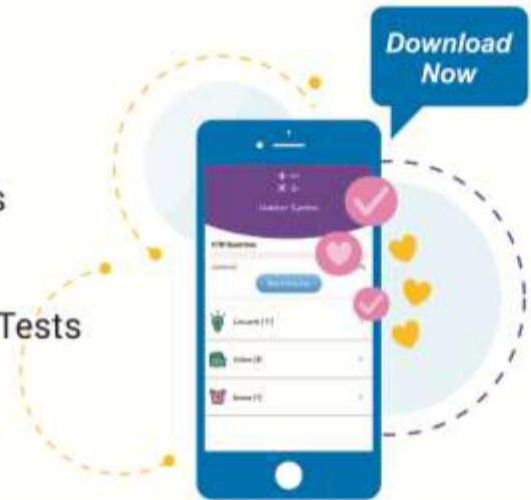
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