



ASPIRE IAS
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PIB

Monthly Magazine

(MAY - 2020)

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PM Modi holds a review meeting to discuss education Sector

What's in News?

PM Narendra Modi held a meeting to deliberate on the issues and reforms required in the education sector including National Education Policy (NEP).

Details:

- Special emphasis was given on the use of technology in the education sector and enhancing learning by the use of technology such as online classes, education portal and class-wise broadcast on dedicated education channels.
- The focus was on bringing uniformity in education providing universal access to quality education, improving the quality of elementary education, through a new national curriculum framework that focuses on multi-linguistic, 21st-century skills, integration of sport and art, environmental issues etc.
- The use and promotion of technology in various modes for education at school and higher levels was discussed in detail – i.e. online mode, TV channels, radio, podcasts etc.
- Reforming the higher education scenario by making Indian Education System at par with the highest global standards making education effective, inclusive, contemporary rooted in the Indian culture and ethos was discussed.
- Overall, the emphasis was given on early childhood care and education, foundational literacy and numeracy, adapting contemporary pedagogy, preserving the cultural and linguistic diversity of India with a special focus on early vocationalization of education.
- It was decided to usher in education reforms to create a vibrant knowledge society by ensuring higher quality education to all thereby making India a 'Global knowledge Super Power'.
- To achieve all these goals and to ensure efficient educational governance, it was decided

to promote extensive use of technology including Artificial Intelligence.

e-NAM platform

What's in News?

200 new mandis from 7 States have been integrated with the e-NAM platform for marketing of Agricultural produce.

- According to the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, the e-NAM platform is moving towards One Nation One Market.
- e – National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal which nets the prevailing Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC) Mandis for making a united national market for agricultural commodities.

Five more States/UTs board 'One Nation One Ration Card' national portability platform

What's in News?

- The Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has approved the integration of 5 States and Union Territories, – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu – with the National Cluster under the "One Nation One Ration Card" plan.
- Twelve States are already on-board the National Cluster, namely – Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Tripura.

One Nation One Ration Card Scheme:

- One Nation One Ration Card (RC) will ensure that all beneficiaries especially migrants can access PDS across the nation from any PDS shop of their own choice.
- This will provide freedom to the beneficiaries as they will not be tied to any one PDS shop and

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reduce their dependence on shop owners and curtail instances of corruption.

- This will enable nation-wide portability of ration cardholders to receive subsidized foodgrains under NFSA from anywhere in India.
- Installation of electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices at Fair Price Shops (FPSs) is the main enabler of portability of ration card holders, supported by the biometric/Aadhaar authentication.
- The biggest beneficiary of this would be migrant labourers who move to other states to seek better job opportunities.
- The process also aims to do away with manual recordings of transactions, thereby ensuring clarity of record keeping.

AES preparedness in Bihar reviewed through Video Conferencing

What's in News?

- There are concerns over the deaths of children from Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) in Bihar.
- In a particular time during summer from May 15 to the month of June, there is always a hike in the rate of death of young children due to AES in Bihar.
- It has been emphasised to ensure that the cases of AES are not neglected and eclipsed during the time of COVID outbreak.

Details:

- The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare would provide full support and handholding to the State Government through the National Health Mission (NHM) for health systems strengthening.
- However, it is opined that, apart from the constitution of the Committee of Experts for daily monitoring the situation, there is an immediate need for constituting an inter-disciplinary specialist high-level team of experts drawn from

National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Child Health Division of the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to guide the policy interventions and support the State in containing the cases of AES and Japanese Encephalitis.

Government clears roadblock to fast-track PMEGP Projects

What's in News?

In a significant policy decision, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), headed by Union Minister, has done away with the role of District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC), headed by the District Collectors, in recommending the proposals under the Prime Minister Employment Generation Program (PMEGP), thereby simplifying the entire procedure.

Details:

- As of now, the proposals were scrutinized by the DLTFC, that often led to inordinate delays in sanctioning of the projects.
- As per the amended guidelines, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), the nodal agency for implementing PMEGP scheme, after due diligence, will directly clear the proposals/applications of the prospective entrepreneurs and will forward it to the Banks for taking credit decisions.
- The KVIC, in association with the Bankers Association of India, shall also develop a scoring sheet and upload the same on the PMEGP E-portal.
- The amendment in the policy would pave the way for swift implementation of projects and create new employment opportunities in rural and semi urban areas under the PMEGP scheme.

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):

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• Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a major credit-linked subsidy scheme launched by merging two schemes namely Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY) and Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) for generating employment opportunities by establishing micro-enterprises in urban and rural areas in the non-farm sector.

Kisan Sabha App

What's in News?

Kisan Sabha App has been launched by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to Connect Farmers to Supply Chain and Freight Transportation Management System.

- Kisan Sabha App has been developed to connect farmers to supply chain and freight transportation management system.
- Kisan Sabha aims to provide the most economical and timely logistics support to the farmers and increase their profit margins by minimizing the interference of middlemen and directly connecting with the institutional buyers.
- It will also help in providing the best market rates of crops by comparing nearest mandis, booking of freight vehicle at the cheapest cost thereby giving maximum benefit to the farmers.
- The portal connects the farmers, transporters, Service providers (like pesticides/ fertilizer/dealers, cold store and warehouse owner), mandi dealers, customers (like big retail outlets, online stores, institutional buyers) and other related entities for a timely and effective solution.
- The portal acts as a single stop for every entity related to agriculture, be they a farmer who needs better price for the crops or mandi dealer who wants to connect to more farmers or truckers who invariably go empty from the mandis.
- Kisan Sabha also works for people in agriculture services sector such as dealers of fertilizers/ pesticides, who can reach out to more farmers for their services.

- It would also prove to be useful for those associated with cold stores or godowns.
- It also provides a platform for people who want to buy directly from the farmers.

India's R&D expenditure & scientific publications on the rise

What's in News?

- National Science and Technology Management Information (NSTMIS), Department of Science and Technology (DST) has brought out the National S&T survey 2018, that includes R&D Statistics and Indicators 2019-20.
- The report on R&D indicators for the nation is an extraordinarily important document for the evidence-based policymaking and planning in higher education, R&D activities and support, intellectual property, and industrial competitiveness.

Key findings of the report:

- India's gross expenditure in R&D has tripled between 2008 & 2018 driven mainly by the government sector and scientific publications have risen placing the country internationally among the top few.
- India is placed 3rd among countries in a scientific publication.
- The number of researchers per million population has doubled since 2000.
- India is ranked at 9th position in terms of Resident Patent Filing activity in the world.

Sariska Tiger Reserve

- Sariska Tiger Reserve is located in the **Aravalli Hills, Alwar district, Rajasthan**.
- The park has populations of **tigers, leopards, Nilgai, Sambar, chital**, etc.
- It shelters a large population of **Indian peafowl, crested serpent eagles, sand grouse, golden backed woodpeckers, great Indian horned owls, tree pies, vultures** and many others.

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• It was given the status of a **tiger reserve** making it a part of India's Project Tiger in 1978.

Project Tiger:

• Project Tiger is an ongoing **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.

• India now has as many as 2,967 tigers in the wild, with **more than half of them in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka**, according to the latest tiger estimation report for 2018.

• The **population has increased by 33% since the last census in 2014** when the total estimate was 2,226.

• Sariska is the **first tiger reserve** to have successfully **relocated Royal Bengal tigers in India** and at present there are around 20 tigers in the reserve.

Lifeline Udan

'Lifeline Udan' flights are being operated by MoCA to transport essential medical cargo to remote parts of the country to support India's war against COVID-19.

IDEAthon on 'The Future of River Management'

What's in News?

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) organized an IDEAthon on "The future of River Management" to explore how the COVI-19 crisis can shape **River Management strategies** for the future.

Background:

• While the general narrative around this crisis has been that of anxiety and concern, the crisis has also thrown up some positive developments.

• One of these is the visible improvement in the natural environment.

• Rivers have become cleaner. The air has become fresher. There has been a significant drop in GHG emissions.

• Animals and birds are returning to and enjoying their habitats.

Details:

• Purely from a river management point of view, in India there has been a **noticeable improvement in the water quality of the Ganga and the Yamuna**.

• During the last year or so, the **Gangetic Dolphin, an indicator species**, has been showing improvements with sightings at several stretches of the river.

• The IDEAthon examined the **response mechanisms** that are needed in the event of a river crisis and how the **social angle of rivers can be leveraged** on to address other crises based on the lessons for river management that the pandemic has taught.

• National Mission for Clean Ganga had initiated this IDEAthon to garner more attention towards **river management** and also highlight the **interconnectivity of Cities with the River**.

• A different perspective than traditional urban planning methods, the River cities need a special focus to capitalize on not only the socio-cultural significance of the river but also the ecological importance and economic potential which can help the city, if properly planned.

With intent to mainstream River Management in a city's Urban Planning framework, NMCG has been developing a template for an Urban River Management Plan with the National Institute of Urban Affairs.

NMCG is also working with GIZ (Germany's leading development agency) in developing the River Basin Organization and also River Basin Planning and Management Cycle to develop an

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adaptive framework under Namami Gange for Ganga river basin management.

Namami Gange:

- Namami Gange is **one of the largest river rejuvenation programs** aimed at ensuring effective **abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the Ganga** basin by adopting an integrated river basin approach and promoting inter-sectoral coordination for comprehensive planning and management.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)

Context:

Employees of EPFO contribute Rs 2.5 crore to PM CARES fund.

About the PM CARES Fund:

- PM CARES Fund is a public charitable trust set up by the Central Government in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19
- To know more about the PM CARES Fund, check CAN dated March 31

Lokpal

Context:

Judicial Member, Lokpal of India, Justice Ajay Kumar Tripathi died fighting COVID-19.

About Lokpal:

- Lokpal is a redressal mechanism in India, along with Lokayuktas, PILS and the Whistleblower Protection Act.
- Read more about them from the links in the table below:

Support for tribals during COVID-19 pandemic

Context:

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has advised all states to speed up procurement operations for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) to support the Tribals especially in the backdrop of the situation created by the pandemic and also keeping in view that it is now peak season for gathering of MFP.

Details:

- An online monitoring dashboard has been created for reporting the activities undertaken at the State level for procurement of Minor Forest Produce.
- It is called the **Van Dhan Monit Dashboard**, part of the "TRIFED E- Sampark Setu" being created for an exchange of information to and from every Panchayat and Van Dhan Kendra, either through Mail or Mobile.
- TRIFED proposes to link up with 10 lakh villages, district and state level partners, agencies and SHGs.
- The State Implementing Agencies have started updating the dashboards as the work progresses in their States.
- States have appointed the Van Dhan Kendras as their primary procurement agents for MFP procurements from haat bazaars.
- The Scheme of '**Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products**' has a Minimum Support Price component and a Value Addition component and aims to raise the incomes of tribal gatherers and promote enterprise among them.
- To ensure higher and remunerative prices to tribal gatherers, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has issued a revised price list of MSP for MFP on 01 May 2020.

Non Aligned Movement (NAM)

Context:

Prime Minister participates at the online Summit of NAM Contact Group.

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Details:

- The online **NAM Contact Group Summit** on the theme of "United against COVID-19" was hosted by the current Chairman of NAM, the President of Azerbaijan.
- The objective of the Summit was to promote international solidarity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and to mobilise efforts of States and international organisations to address the pandemic.
- The event also commemorated the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace.
- PM Modi was joined by over 30 other Heads of State and Government and other leaders, including from member States in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe.
- Following the Summit, leaders adopted a Declaration underlining the importance of international solidarity in the fight against COVID-19.
- Leaders also announced the creation of a 'Task Force' to identify needs and requirements of member States through the establishment of a common database reflecting their basic medical, social and humanitarian needs in the fight against COVID-19.

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

Context:

DRDO develops UV Disinfection Tower.



UV Blaster

Details:

- Defence Research and Development Organisation has developed an Ultra Violet (UV) Disinfection Tower for rapid and chemical-free disinfection of high infection prone areas.
- The equipment named **UV blaster** is a UV based area sanitiser designed and developed by Laser Science & Technology Centre (LASTEC), the Delhi-based premier laboratory of DRDO with the help of M/s New Age Instruments and Materials Private Limited, Gurugram.
- The UV Blaster is useful for high tech surfaces like electronic equipment, computers and other gadgets in laboratories and offices that are not suitable for disinfection with chemical methods.
- The product is also effective for areas with large flow of people such as airports, shopping malls, metros, hotels, factories, offices, etc.
- The UV based area sanitiser may be used by remote operation through laptop/mobile phone using Wi-Fi link.
- The equipment has six lamps each with 43 watts of UV-C power at 254 nm wavelength for 360 degree illumination.

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- For a room of about 12 x 12 feet dimension, the disinfection time is about 10 minutes and 30 minutes for 400 square feet area by positioning the equipment at different places within the room.
- This sanitiser switches off on accidental opening of room or human intervention. One more salient safety feature of the product is the key to arm operation.

Government of India to facilitate return of Indian Nationals stranded abroad

Context:

The Government of India will be facilitating the return of Indian nationals stranded abroad on compelling grounds in a phased manner.

Details:

- The travel would be arranged by aircraft and naval ships.
 - Indian Embassies and High Commissions are preparing a list of distressed Indian citizens.
 - This facility would be made available on payment-basis. Non-scheduled commercial flights would be arranged for air travel.
 - The travel would begin in a phased manner from May 7.
 - Medical screening of passengers would be done before taking the flight.
 - Only asymptomatic passengers would be allowed to travel.
 - During the journey, all these passengers would have to follow the protocols, such as the Health Protocols, issued by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- On reaching the destination:
- The passengers would have to register on the Aarogya Setu App.
 - They would be medically screened.
 - After scrutiny, they would be quarantined for 14 days, either in a hospital or in an institutional

quarantine on payment-basis, by the concerned State government.

- COVID test would be done after 14 days and further action would be taken according to health protocols.

State Governments are being advised to make arrangements, including for testing, quarantine and onward movement of the returning Indians in their respective States.

Saras Collection

Context:

The Union Agriculture Minister launched "The Saras Collection" on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.

Details:

- The Saras Collection is an initiative of the GeM, the DAY-NRLM and the Ministry of Rural Development.
- The Saras Collection showcases daily utility products made by rural self-help groups (SHGs) and aims to provide SHGs in rural areas with market access to Central and State Government buyers.
- Under this initiative, the SHG sellers will be able to list their products in 5 product categories, namely (i) handicrafts, (ii) handloom and textiles, (iii) office accessories, (iv) grocery and pantry, and (v) personal care and hygiene.
- More than 900 SHGs from 11 states have already been on-boarded on this initiative.
- GeM will provide dashboards for functionaries at the national, state, district and block level to provide them real time information about the number of products uploaded by SHGs, and value and volume of orders received and fulfilled.
- In addition, Government buyers shall be sensitized through system generated messages/alerts in the Marketplace about availability of SHG products on the portal.

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- Potential buyers shall be able to search, view, cart and procure such products through the stipulated modes of procurement.
- Sellers are being assisted with product catalogue management, order fulfilment and bid participation.
- GeM shall also collaborate with State functionaries to address the capacity building and training needs of SHGs, and build up their competencies required for order packaging, catalogue management and logistics.
- **By providing SHGs with direct access to Government buyers, the Saras Collection will do away with intermediaries in the supply chain, thus ensuring better prices for SHGs and spurring employment opportunities at the local level.**

About GeM:

- It is the national public procurement portal offering end to end solutions for all procurement needs of Central and State Government Departments, PSUs, autonomous institutions and local bodies.
- Since its launch in 2016, it has transformed public procurement in the country by leveraging technology and making procurement contactless, paperless, and cashless.
- GeM has more than 15 lakh products and around 20,000 services, more than 3 lakh registered sellers and service providers and more than 40,000 government buyer organizations.
- State Departments and organisations, and public sector enterprises (PSEs) have been using GeM for their buying needs. Sellers from the States are also benefiting through access to the national public procurement market using the portal.
- GeM's vision is "to affect an evolution in public procurement promoting a transparent, efficient and inclusive marketplace."

**Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya
Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)**

Context:

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) accepting orders on WhatsApp and e-mail to facilitate medicine procurement during lockdown.

Details:

- Under this initiative, the accepted orders (on the basis of uploaded prescriptions) are delivered at the patients' doorsteps.
- PMBJKs are work under the PMBJP.
- At present, there are over 6300 PMBJKs functioning in 726 districts of the country ensuring supply of quality medicines at affordable prices. These medicine are cheaper by about 50% to 90% on an average.

GARUD Portal

Context:

The Civil Aviation Ministry and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) have launched the GARUD Portal for providing fast track conditional exemptions to government agencies for COVID-19 related RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aircraft System)/drone operations.

Details:

- GARUD is an acronym for 'Government Authorisation for Relief Using Drones'.
- The portal was designed, developed, beta-tested, and launched by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), New Delhi.
- The DCGA has issued rules according to which many geographical areas are restricted for RPA operations.
- These includes regions within 5 km distance from the perimeter of airports at the major metro cities, other prohibited areas like military installations/facilities, ecologically-sensitive areas, etc.

Operation 'Samudra Setu'

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Context:

Indian Navy launches Operation "Samudra Setu".

About Operation "Samudra Setu":

- The Indian Navy has launched Operation Samudra Setu (Meaning: Sea Bridge) as a part of the national effort to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas.
- Indian Naval Ships Jalashwa and Magar are presently en route to the port of Malé, Republic of Maldives to commence phase I of the evacuation operations.
- The Indian Mission in the Republic of Maldives is preparing a list of Indian nationals to be evacuated by naval ships and will facilitate their embarkation after requisite medical screening.
- A total of 1000 persons are planned to be evacuated during the first trip, catering for COVID-related social distancing norms vis-a-vis the carrying capacity and medical facilities available onboard.
- The ships have been suitably provisioned for the evacuation operation. The evacuated personnel would be provided the basic amenities and medical facilities during the sea-passage.
- The evacuated personnel will be disembarked at Kochi, Kerala and entrusted to the care of State authorities.
- This operation is being progressed in close coordination with the Ministries of Defence, External Affairs, Home Affairs, Health and various other agencies of the Government of India and State governments.

CSIR IGIB and TATA Sons sign an MoU

Context:

CSIR IGIB and TATA Sons sign an MoU for licensing knowhow related to the development of a kit for rapid and accurate diagnosis of COVID-19.

Details:

- CSIR's constituent lab, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB) and TATA Sons signed an MoU for licensing of the knowhow for FNCAS9 Editor Linked Uniform Detection Assay (FELUDA) for the rapid diagnosis of COVID-19.

• About FELUDA for COVID-19:

- A completely indigenous scientific invention, FELUDA for COVID-19 has been designed for mitigating the ongoing COVID-19 situation and cater to mass testing.
- Its main advantages are its affordability, relative ease of use and non-dependency on expensive Q-PCR machines.

CSIR IGIB and TATA Sons will now work together to bring it for widespread use at the earliest.

159th birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore

Context:

The National Gallery of Modern Art will organise a Virtual Tour titled "Gurudev – Journey of the Maestro through his visual vocabulary" from 7th May 2020 to commemorate the 159th birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

Details:

- Rabindranath Tagore, the composer of India's national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana', was not only a brilliant poet and storyteller, but also a phenomenal painter.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)

Context:

Around 39 crore poor people received financial assistance of Rs 34,800 crore under the PMGKP.

Aarogya Setu Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS)

Context:

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Aarogya Setu IVRS services implemented to cater to people having feature phone or landline.

Details:

- The Aarogya Setu App, developed by the Ministry of Electronics and IT, enables people to assess for themselves the risk of their catching the Corona Virus infection.
- It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using cutting edge Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence.
- The app is available on both Google Play (for Android phones) and iOS app store (for iPhones). It is available in 10 Indian languages and also English.

For including the citizens with feature phones and landline under the protection of Aarogya Setu, the "Aarogya Setu Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS)" has been implemented.

This service is available across the country. This is a toll-free service, where citizens are asked to give a missed call to the number 1921 and they will get a call back requesting for inputs regarding their health.

DST INSPIRE Faculty develops nanomaterials having energy storage application & optical sensors for water pollution control

Context:

A recipient of the INSPIRE Faculty Award instituted by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), from the IIT Varanasi (BHU), along with his team, has made significant achievements in developing nanomaterial-based supercapacitors to achieve high energy density and power density of supercapacitors.

Details:

- Increasing energy demand due to the growth of human population and technological advancement poses a great challenge for human society.

- High energy density of supercapacitors suggests that constant current can be withdrawn for longer duration without recharging.

- Hence, automobiles can run longer distances without charging. Supercapacitors can be an alternative for such purposes.

- The research team developed a reduced graphene oxide (rGO) at a moderate temperature of 100°C with high capacitance performance. The production process is a cost-effective one, making it suitable for commercial purposes.

- They have also developed a novel green approach for the synthesis of iron-based nanocatalyst, which can be used for the large scale production of Carbon Nanotubes.

- The group is also working on optoelectronic applications of nanomaterials.

- In this context, they are working on developing novel nanostructures of carbon and metal dichalcogenides semiconductors for photodetection and Surface-Enhanced Raman spectroscopy (SERS).

- Through this work, they have demonstrated excellent photodetection behaviour of different architectures of nanoscale MoS₂ for the detection of visible light.

- The high photoresponsivity obtained in this work can be useful to develop ultrafast detectors for signalling purpose.

The SERS can help detect harmful molecules present in water at ultra-low concentrations.

- His group has successfully demonstrated detection of Rhodamine 6G (R6G), an organic laser dye up to lowest limit of sub-nano-molar concentration using rGO and MoS₂ nanomaterials.

Their focus on energy and optoelectronics devices paves the way for the development of cost-effective and efficient devices, which can be used for energy storage application.

Their findings make way for materials which can be used as advanced photodetectors and also be used as optical sensors for water pollution control.

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Flowering plant endemism of Northern Western Ghats

Context:

Study of flowering plant endemism of Northern Western Ghats highlights importance of plateaus in conservation plans.

Details:

- Scientists at the Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune, an autonomous institute of the DST, have come up with plant data of the Northern Western Ghats which indicate that plateaus, in addition to forests, should be prioritized for conservation of the Northern Western Ghats.
- It is the plateaus and the cliffs that harbour most of the endemic species, thus increasing their importance in conservation plans.
- The scientists found that a majority of the endemic species are therophytes, which complete their life cycle in a short period during the monsoons.
- The Western Ghats of India is one of the global biodiversity hotspots owing to the endemism that is sheltered by a chain of mountains.
- The northern part of this biodiversity hotspot, along with the Konkan region, is considerably different from its southern and central counterparts on account of lesser precipitation and extended dry season.
- A notable geographical feature of the Northern Western Ghats is the presence of plateaus and cliffs that display maximum endemic species, unlike forests. Forests of the Northern Western Ghats harbour many species which are not endemic.

Parliamentary Committees

Context:

RS Chairman and LS Speaker discuss COVID and meetings of Parliamentary Committees.

Details:

- The Vice President and the Speaker discussed the role being played by Members of Parliament and the feasibility of holding meetings of Committees of Parliament in the wake of COVID-19.

Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)

Context:

Notice period for draft Environment Impact Assessment Notification (EIA), 2020 extended till 30th June.

AYUSH Sanjivani App

Context:

The Union Health & Family Welfare Minister launched the 'AYUSH Sanjivani' App and two AYUSH based studies related to the COVID-19 situation.

Details:

• AYUSH Sanjivani App:

- The App will help to generate data on the acceptance and usage of AYUSH advocacies and measures among the population and its impact in prevention of COVID-19.
- It is developed by the Ministry of AYUSH and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and shall reach out to a target of 50 lakh people.

The AYUSH Ministry, in collaboration with the Health Ministry, launched the clinical trials of Ayurvedic medicines for the novel coronavirus infection.

The scientific studies on Ayurveda interventions as preventive prophylaxis and as an add-on to standard care to COVID-19 are a joint initiative of AYUSH Ministry, Health Ministry and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) with technical support of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

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Ayurvedic medicines such as Ashwagandha, Yashtimadhu, Guduchi Pippali, and a poly herbal formulation (Ayush-64) are being used in the clinical trials involving health workers and those working in COVID-19 high-risk areas.

The researchers would test Ashwagandha for prevention against SARS-CoV-2 in subjects with increased risk during the COVID 19 Pandemic – a comparison with Hydroxychloroquine in the health care providers.

Another study is to assess the effectiveness of Ayurveda Formulation as an adjunct to 'Standard of Care' for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19.

Prime Minister's Research Fellowship Scheme (PMRF)

Context:

Union HRD Minister announces modifications in PMRF Scheme to boost research in the country.

Details:

- The modifications will enable more students to avail of the benefits under PMRF scheme.
- After the amendments, now for the students from any recognised institute/university (other than IISc/IITs/NITs/IISERs/IIEST/CF IITs), the requirement of GATE Score is reduced to 650 from 750 apart from minimum CGPA of 8 or equivalent.
- Now, there will be two channels of entries, direct entry and lateral entry.
- Under the lateral entry, candidates pursuing PhD in any PMRF granting institution can apply for the PMRF scheme if he/she satisfies certain conditions, as prescribed.

MahaKavach App

Context:

MahaKavach App has been introduced by the Government of Maharashtra.

Details:

- MahaKavach is a real-time digital contact tracing mobile application which enables citizens to contribute and assist the health authorities in contact tracing, geo-fencing and tracking of quarantined COVID-19 patients.
- Selfie attendance feature has been also added in the application to get virtual attendance.
- This app is to be used by individuals as directed by their doctor or medical worker.
- The app also encourages to update the quarantine status for greater adherence.
- This update increases reliability of home location data.
- It also ensures a breach update is sent only once.

The app is not being openly listed on Android or iOS app stores, and according to internal sources, will only be used by the government to track specific, suspected COVID-19 cases, or those who have already been put in quarantine by health officials in the state.

The app will use smartphone-based location services, and will be used to geo-fence the individuals.

The app will not be accessible to everyone, as the state government aims to use it for very targeted cases.

JNCASR scientists fabricate energy-efficient photodetector for security application

Context:

Scientists from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology, have fabricated an economical and energy-efficient **wafer-scale photodetector** (thin slice-based) using gold – silicon interface, for security applications.

Details:

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- This photodetector could help detect weak scattered light as an indication of unwanted activity.
- This invention provides a simple and cost-effective solution-based fabrication method for high-performance photodetector.
- The scientists have fabricated gold (Au)– silicon (n-Si) interface, which showed high sensitivity towards light demonstrating the photodetection action.
- The Au–Si interface was brought about by galvanic deposition, a technique for electroplating of metals, wherein water-based solutions (electrolytes) are used, which contain the metals to be deposited as ions.
- In addition, a nanostructured Au film also was deposited on top of p-type silicide (having an excess of positive charges), which acts as a charge collector.

Being a solution-based technique, the method is highly economical and enables large-area fabrication without compromising the detector response.

The process is quick, taking only minutes to fabricate a detector of any arbitrary area.

The metal nanostructures enhanced the performance of the fabricated detector through trapping the incoming light.

This photodetector displayed long-term environmental stability.

The detector exhibits a rapid response of 40 microseconds and can detect low light intensities.

The device covers a broad spectral range from Ultraviolet to Infrared.

Besides, it shows excellent uniformity throughout the entire active area with less than 5% variation in response.

Notably, the detector operates in self-powered mode, which means the device does not require external power for its operation, thus making it energy efficient.

With a commonly available protective coating, excellent environmental stability is shown for the device under harsh conditions for several days.

The scientists also demonstrated the photodetector's utility as a prototype imaging system, lux and power meter, and also as a tool for security applications.

About Photodetectors:

- Photodetectors are sensors that can convert the photon energy of light into electrical signal. They are microelectronic devices that can detect light in order to record image information.
- They are absolutely necessary for various scientific implementations like fiber optic communication systems, process control, environmental sensing, safety and security, and also in defense-related applications.
- Photodetectors are at the heart of any optoelectronic circuit that can detect light.
- They are employed for a wide variety of applications ranging from controlling automatic lighting in supermarkets to detecting radiation from outer galaxy as well as security-related applications.

PM pays tributes to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore

What's in News?

The Prime Minister paid tributes to **Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore** on his Jayanti.

- Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary is celebrated by Bengalis all over the world as **Rabindra Jayanti**.

- It is marked on the **25th day of the Bengali month of Boisakh** (falls in early May in the Gregorian calendar).

- It is **celebrated in Bangladesh also**.

Rabindranath Tagore:

- Rabindranath Tagore is also known by his pen name **Bhanu Singha Thakur**.

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- He is also known by his sobriquets **Gurudev, Kabiguru, and Biswakabi**.
- He was a polymath, poet, musician, artist and ayurveda-researcher.
- Tagore is the composer of **India's national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana'**.
- He also composed **Bangladesh's national anthem 'Amar Shonar Bangla'**.

Background:

- Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May 1861 to an upper class Bengali family in his ancestral home in Calcutta.
- Tagore wrote his first poetry when he was 8 years of age.
- He published his first poems aged 16 under the pen-name 'Bhanusimha'.
- His notable works include **Gitanjali, Ghare-Baire, Gora, Manasi, Balaka, Sonar Tori**.
- He is also remembered for his song '**Ekla Chalo Re**'.
- He became the **first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature** when he won the award in 1913 for his translation of his own work in Bengali, **Gitanjali**.
- He has composed over 2000 songs and his songs and music are called '**Rabindrasangeet**' with its own distinct lyrical and fluid style.
- Tagore had composed **Amar Shonar Bangla in 1905** in the wake of the Bengal partition to foster a spirit of unity and patriotism among Bengalis.
- Tagore **fiercely opposed the partition**.

Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage

What's in News?

Ushering in a new era in undertaking Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra and border area connectivity, Raksha Mantri inaugurated the **road link from Dharchula (Uttarakhand) to Lipulekh (China Border)**.

- The Kailash-Mansarovar road alignment is along the Kali river, which is the **boundary between India and Nepal**.

- The endpoint of the road is at Lipulekh Pass, a **tri-junction of India, China and Nepal**.

- Pilgrimage to Kailash-Manasarovar is sacred and revered by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains.

Darchula:

- Dharchula lies north of Pithoragarh, along the route of the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage tour.
- Dharchula is a major **trading centre** for the trans-Himalayan trade routes since medieval times.
- Dharchula is surrounded by **Himalayan Peaks**.

Lipulekh:

- Lipulekh is a **Himalayan pass on the border between India's Uttarakhand state and the Tibet region of China, near their trijunction with Nepal**.
- Nepal has ongoing claims to the southern side of the pass, called **Kalapani territory**, which is controlled by India.

What is the Kalapani dispute?

- Kalapani is a 372-sq km area at the China-Nepal-India tri-junction.
- India claims Kalapani as a part of Uttarakhand while Nepal depicts the area in its map.
- The border dispute flared up again recently after India released its new political map following the reorganisation of J&K showing the area as its own.
- According to the **Sugauli treaty signed between Nepal and British India in 1816**, the **Mahakali river** that runs through the Kalapani area is the boundary between the two countries.
- However, British surveyors subsequently showed the origin of the river, which has many tributaries, at different places.

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- While Nepal claims that the river, west of the disputed territory is the main river and so Kalapani falls in its territory, **India claims a different origin and includes the area in its territory.**

- Strategically, Lipulekh pass in Kalapani serves as an important vantage point for India to keep an eye on Chinese movements.

- Since 1962, **Kalapani has been manned by the Indi-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).**

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

What's in News?

PM pays tributes to **Gopal Krishna Gokhale** on his birth anniversary.

Details:

- Gopal Krishna Gokhale was **born on 9 May 1866** in Kotluk village in present-day Maharashtra (then part of the Bombay Presidency) in a Brahmin family.

- A **renowned social reformer of India**, Gopal Krishna Gokhale was **one of the leaders of the moderate bloc of the Indian National Congress.**

- He was known to be the **Mahatma Gandhi's political mentor.**

- In 1905, he was elected **president of the Indian National Congress (Benares Session)..**

- In 1905, **he formed the Servants of India Society in Pune** (Maharashtra) to further the expansion of education in India. The Society organised mobile libraries, founded schools, and provided night classes for factory workers.

- In 1908, he **founded the 'Ranade Institute of Economics'.**

- He **launched the English weekly newspaper named The Hitavada** (The people's paper) in 1911.

- Gopal Krishna Gokhale **died on 19 February 1915 aged 48.**

Maharana Pratap

What's in News?

PM pays tributes to Maharana Pratap on his Jayanti

Details:

- Maharana Pratap Singh **popularly known as "Maharana" was the 13th king of Mewar** (the present Rajasthan).

- He was born on May 9, 1540.

- He is known for his bravery in the **Battle of Haldighati.**

- It was **fought in 1576 between Maharana and the forces of Akbar led by Man Singh of Amber.**

- Rana's forces were defeated in 6 hours. But the Mughals failed to capture him.

- Maharana re-gathered his forces, fought and **won against the Mughals after six years in 1582.**

- Having faced a terrible defeat, Akbar stopped his military campaigns against Mewar after the battle.

Clarification in respect of residency under section 6 of the Income-tax Act, 1961

What's in News?

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has **issued a circular with clarifications for the purposes of determining the residential status under section 6 of the Income-tax Act, 1961 Act** during the previous year 2019-20 in respect of an individual who has come to India on a visit before 22nd March, 2020.

Issue:

- Various representations have been received stating that there are a number of **individuals** who had come on a visit to India during the previous year 2019-20 for a particular duration and **intended to leave India before the end of the previous year for maintaining their status**

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as a non-resident or not ordinary resident in India.

- However, due to the declaration of the lockdown and suspension of international flights owing to the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) they are required to prolong their stay in India.
- Concerns have been expressed that they may involuntarily end up becoming Indian residents without any intention to do so.

Details:

• **Section 6 of the Income-tax Act, 1961 contains provisions relating to residency of a person.**

- The status of an individual as to whether he is resident in India or a non-resident or not ordinarily resident, is dependent, inter-alia, on the period for which the person is in India during a year.

For Example:

A resident taxpayer is an individual who satisfies one of the following conditions:

- Resides in India for a minimum of 182 days in a year.
- Has resided in India for a minimum of 365 days in the immediately preceding four years. In addition, he must reside in India for a minimum of 60 days in the current financial year.

Mission Sagar

Context:

India launched Mission Sagar to assist island nations in the Eastern Indian Ocean.

About Mission Sagar:

- India launched Mission Sagar as part of the government's outreach initiative towards five Island nations in the Indian Ocean amidst the ongoing COVID-19
- Indian Naval Ship Kesari has departed for Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, to provide food items, COVID-related

medicines including HCQ tablets and special Ayurvedic medicines with medical assistance teams.

- Also, as part of the mission, INS Kesari would enter the Port of Male in the Republic of Maldives, to provide them 600 tons of food provisions.

- India and Maldives are close maritime neighbours with strong and cordial defence and diplomatic relations.

COVID-19 related essential medicines including HCQ tablets were already sent earlier to Mauritius, Maldives and Seychelles.

A team of select medical personnel was also dispatched earlier to Maldives to augment their preparedness to fight this crisis.

This deployment as 'Mission Sagar' is in line with India's role as the first responder in the region and builds on the excellent relations existing between these countries to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant difficulties, said the Ministry of Defence.

The deployment is in consonance with the Prime Ministers' vision of **Security and Growth for All in the Region 'SAGAR'** promulgated in March 2015.

SAGAR highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with her neighbouring countries and further strengthens the existing bond.

The operation is being progressed in close coordination with the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.

COVID-19 Management

Context:

Adequate health infrastructure and health facilities set up for COVID-19 management.

Details:

- The public health facilities dedicated for COVID-19 cases management are categorised into three categories as described below:

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• **Category I: Dedicated COVID Hospital (DCH)**

- The Dedicated COVID Hospitals are hospitals that offer comprehensive care primarily for those who have been clinically assigned as severe.
- These hospitals shall have fully equipped ICUs, ventilators and beds with assured oxygen support.
- These hospitals shall have separate areas for suspect and confirmed cases.
- The Dedicated COVID Hospitals shall serve as referral centres for the Dedicated COVID Health Centres and the COVID Care Centres.

• **Category II: Dedicated COVID Health Centre (DCHC)**

- The Dedicated COVID Health Centres are hospitals that offer care for all cases that have been clinically assigned as moderate.
- The Dedicated COVID Health Centres shall have separate areas for suspect and confirmed cases.
- These hospitals shall have beds with assured oxygen support.
- Every Dedicated COVID Health Centre is mapped to one or more Dedicated COVID Hospitals.

• **Category III: Dedicated COVID Care Centre (DCCC)**

- The COVID Care Centres shall offer care only for cases that have been clinically assigned as mild or very mild cases or COVID suspect cases.
- These are makeshift facilities which may be set up by the States/UTs in hostels, hotels, schools, stadiums, lodges, etc., both public and private.
- These facilities shall have separate areas for suspected and confirmed cases.
- Every Dedicated COVID Care Centre is mapped to one or more Dedicated COVID Health Centres and at least one Dedicated COVID Hospital for referral purpose.
- As of 10th May, 7740 facilities in 483 districts have been identified in all the States/UTs that include hospitals and facilities of the State/UT Governments as well as the Central Government.

Shramik Special Trains

Context:

Indian Railway operates "Shramik Special" trains across the country.

Details:

- Subsequent to the order of the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding movement of migrant workers, pilgrims, tourists, students and other persons stranded at different places by special trains, the Indian Railways had decided to operate "Shramik Special" trains.
- Passengers are being given free meals and water.
- Trains are being run by the Railways only after concurrence is given both by the State which is sending the passengers and the State which is receiving them.
- Social distancing is being observed in the trains with around 1200 passengers traveling in each of these "Shramik Special" trains.

National Technology Day

Context:

National Technology Day is observed in India on May 11 every year to commemorate the nuclear testing conducted at the Pokhran Test Range in 1998.

Details:

- A high-level digital conference on 'Rebooting the Economy through Science, Technology and Research Translations titled RESTART' will be organised by the Technology Development Board (TDB), a statutory body of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on the 2020 National Technology Day.
- The conference will bring together scientists, technocrats, government officials, diplomats, WHO officials and dignitaries from national and international industry, research institutions and

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academic institutions on a single platform to share their insights on the role played by S&T in the global healthcare crisis.

- The conference also aims to discuss possible solutions that not only address the current pandemic but will also help humanity in facing future challenges.
- TDB, on behalf of the Ministry of Science & Technology, celebrates May 11 every year as National Technology Day to commemorate achievements of innovations and technological excellence in the country.
- The day has a historical perspective as it was on May 11, 1998, that India achieved a major technological breakthrough by successfully carrying out nuclear tests at Pokhran.
- Further, the first indigenous aircraft "Hansa-3" was test flown at Bangalore on this day.
- India also performed successful test firing of the Trishul missile on the same day.

Since 1999, the day is being celebrated as National Technology Day.

The celebration of Technology Day symbolizes India's quest for scientific inquiry, technological creativity & innovations, and the integration of these developments into national socio-economic benefits and global presence.

Indo-Bangladesh 'Virtual Conference'

Context:

Union Minister addressed the Indo-Bangladesh "Virtual Conference" organised by ASSOCHAM.

About ASSOCHAM:

- The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) is one of the apex trade associations of India.
- The organisation represents the interests of trade and commerce in India, and acts as an interface between issues and initiatives.
- The goal of the organisation is to promote domestic and international trade.

- It was established in 1920.

Gandhi Peace Prize

Context:

Government extends last date for receipt of nominations for the Gandhi Peace Prize 2020 up to 15.6.2020.

Details:

- The Ministry of Culture invites nominations for awarding the Gandhi Peace Prize every year.
- The nominations are to be made in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Procedure for Gandhi Peace Prize as prescribed by the Ministry.
- For the year 2020, the last date for receiving the nominations was 30th April 2020. Due to COVID-19 lockdown throughout the country, the last date has now been extended.

About the Gandhi Peace Prize:

- The International Gandhi Peace Prize, named after Mahatma Gandhi, is awarded annually by the Government of India.
- As a tribute to the ideals espoused by Gandhi, the Government of India launched the Prize in 1995 on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Mohandas Gandhi.
- This is an annual award given to individuals and institutions for their contributions towards social, economic and political transformation through non-violence and other Gandhian methods.
- The award carries ₹ 1 Crore (10 million) in cash, convertible in any currency in the world, a plaque and a citation.
- It is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, creed or gender.
- A jury consisting of the Prime Minister of India, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Chief Justice of India, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and one other eminent person decides the awardee each year.

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- If it is considered that none of the proposals or nominations merit recognition, the jury is free to withhold the award for that year; the award was withheld in the years from 2006 to 2012 inclusive.
- The first recipient of the award was Tanzanian leader Julius Nyerere, in 1995.
- The latest recipient (in 2018) was Yōhei Sasakawa of Japan, for his work in leprosy eradication in India and across the world.
- Other awardees include ISRO, Ramakrishna Mission, Akshaya Patra Foundation, Sulabh International, Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, etc.

Note: This award is different from the Gandhi Peace Award which is given by a private American organisation.

Atal Pension Yojana

Context:

The social security scheme Atal Pension Yojana has completed five years of implementation.

About Atal Pension Yojana:

- The scheme focuses on providing old age security to the unorganised workers who are not covered under any of the social security schemes.

SwasthVayu

Context:

CSIR – National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), Bengaluru develop BiPAP Non-Invasive Ventilator "SwasthVayu" in 36 days for COVID-19.

Details:

- BiPAP Non-Invasive ventilator is a microcontroller-based precise closed-loop adaptive control system with a built-in biocompatible "3D printed manifold & coupler" with HEPA filter (Highly Efficient Particulate Air Filter).
- It has features like Spontaneous, CPAP, Timed, AUTO BIPAP modes with provision to connect oxygen concentrator or enrichment unit externally.

- The system has been certified for safety and performance by NABL accredited agencies.
- The system has undergone stringent biomedical tests and beta clinical trials at NAL Health Centre.
- The major advantage of this machine is that it is simple to use without any specialized nursing, cost-effective, compact and configured with mainly indigenous components.
- This is ideal for treating COVID-19 patients in wards, make shift hospitals, dispensaries and homes in the current Indian COVID-19 scenario.
- CSIR-NAL is in talks with public and private companies for its mass production.

International Nurses Day

Context:

PM expresses gratitude to Nurses on International Nurses Day.

About International Nurses Day:

- The International Nurses Day is celebrated every year on May 12 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.
- The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has celebrated this day since 1965.
- The theme for 2020 is "Nurses: A Voice to Lead – Nursing the World to Health".

PM CARES Fund

Context:

BPPI contributes Rs.25 Lakh to PM CARES fund.

About PM CARES Fund:

- To support the government in its fight against COVID-19, the Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI), under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, has contributed Rs. 25 Lakh to PM CARES fund.
- Learn more about the PM CARES fund at the linked article.

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Vande Bharat Mission

Context:

6037 Indians return from abroad in 31 flights under Vande Bharat Mission since 7th May 2020.

Details:

- Under this mission, the Ministry of Civil Aviation is coordinating with the Ministry of External Affairs and state Governments for bringing Indians back to their homeland.
- Air India, along with its subsidiary Air India Express, are operating a total of 64 flights (42 by Air India & 24 by AI Express) to 12 countries viz. USA, UK, Bangladesh, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Philippines, UAE and Malaysia to repatriate 14,800 Indians back in the first phase.

Mission Sagar

Context:

INS Kesari hands over food provisions to Maldives under Mission Sagar.

Details:

CHAMPIONS Portal

Context:

Ministry of MSME launches CHAMPIONS Portal www.Champions.gov.in.

Details:

- The Champions portal is a technology-driven control room-cum-management information system.
- The system, utilising modern ICT tools, is aimed at assisting Indian MSMEs march into the big league as National and Global CHAMPIONS.
- CHAMPIONS stands for 'Creation and Harmonious Application of Modern Processes for Increasing the Output and National Strength'.

- The portal is basically for making the smaller units big by solving their grievances, encouraging, supporting, helping and handholding.

- It is a real one-stop-shop solution of the MSME Ministry.

- In addition to ICT tools including telephone, internet and video conference, the system is enabled by Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics and Machine Learning.

- It is also fully integrated on a real time basis with GOI's main grievances portal CPGRAMS and the MSME Ministry's own other web based mechanisms.

- The entire ICT architecture is created in house with the help of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) at no cost.

- As part of the system, a network of control rooms is created in a Hub & Spoke Model.

- The Hub is situated in New Delhi in the MSME Secretary's office.

- The spokes will be in the States in various offices and institutions of the Ministry.

- As of now, 66 state level control rooms are created as part of the system.

Objectives of the Champions Portal:

- How to help the MSMEs in this difficult situation in terms of finance, raw materials, labour, permissions, etc.

- How to help them capture new opportunities like manufacturing of medical accessories and products like PPEs, masks, etc.

- How to identify the sparks, i.e., the bright MSMEs who can not only withstand but can also become national and international champions.

Desert Locust Control

Context:

Agriculture Minister interacts with pesticide industry representatives on the desert locust control.

Details:

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- The government has ordered new machines from the UK to tackle the menace of locusts.
- The locust invasion was first noticed last year (2019) and the farmers were taken unawares as it took place after decades.
- The Centre has compensated the farmers who suffered losses from the NDRF Fund (National Disaster Response Force).
- The locust attack, which had started in the Thar desert in May 2019, had extensively damaged crops and vegetation in as many as 12 districts.

Jal Jeevan Mission

Context:

Haryana to provide tap connections to all rural households by December 2022; Jammu and Kashmir to provide tap water to every household by December 2022.

Details:

- The Government of India is implementing the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' (JJM) in partnership with States to ensure every rural household in the country has FHTC (Functional Household Tap Connection) for drinking water in adequate quantity of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis at affordable service delivery charges leading to improvement in their living standards.

G20

Context:

Union Commerce and Industry Minister attended the 2nd G20 Virtual Trade & Investment Ministers Meeting, held through video-conferencing.

Details:

- India has called upon the G-20 nations to ensure access to essential medicines, treatments and vaccines at affordable prices.
- The Minister asked the G20 members to first focus on immediate and concrete actions that can

ease the distress being faced by people all over the world due to Corona pandemic.

- He said that the unprecedented situation calls for solidarity and a balanced, inclusive and calibrated response.
- An overriding priority for all countries at this time, is to save precious lives.
- He strongly called for agreement to enable the use of TRIPs flexibilities to ensure access to essential medicines, treatments and vaccines at affordable prices.
- He also called upon the G-20 nations to also agree to provide diagnostic and protective equipment, and healthcare professionals across borders where they are most needed.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

Context:

The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is releasing Wholesale price Index (WPI) for the month of April, 2020.

Operation Samudra Setu

Context:

INS Jalashwa returns to Maldives for phase 2.

Details:

- On her second trip, INS Jalashwa is planned to embark 700 Indian citizens and will depart for Kochi by the night of 15 May.
- Earlier, after successfully bringing home 698 Indian nationals to Kochi, INS Jalashwa proceeded for preparatory activities towards Phase II of the evacuation operation which included disinfection and sanitisation of the entire ship with special attention to the areas occupied by the previous set of repatriated citizens.
- The Indian nationals who have been identified for evacuation will be screened medically, allotted IDs and their baggage sanitised before boarding the ship.

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Commonwealth Health Ministers' Meeting

Context:

Union Health Minister attended the 32nd Commonwealth Health Ministers' Meeting through videoconferencing.

About the Commonwealth Health Ministers' Meeting:

- The Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM) is the annual meeting of health ministers from across the Commonwealth countries.
- The meeting reviews activity and events from the previous year and provides a platform for countries to bring issues of health to the attention of their Commonwealth partners and peers.
- Each CHMM provides a ministerial statement summarising the discussion and priorities for the coming year including setting the theme for the next meeting.
- CHMM is held every year in Geneva in mid-May. But in 2020, the meeting was via videoconferencing because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SAMARTH

Context:

NIT Kurukshetra Implements Enterprises Resource Planning (ERP), SAMARTH.

About SAMARTH:

- SAMARTH is an e-Governance platform, developed under the National Mission of Education in Information and Communication Technology Scheme (NMEICT) of the MHRD.
- SAMARTH is an ERP platform and is an Open Standard Open Source Architecture, Secure, Scalable and Evolutionary Process Automation Engine for Universities and Higher Educational Institutions.

- It caters to faculty, students and staff at University/Higher Educational Institutions.

- This initiative will enhance productivity through better information management in the institute by seamless access to information, and its utilization for various purposes.

Parkinson's Disease

Context:

A novel tool to help gain deeper insight into Parkinson's disease developed by scientists from IIT (ISM) Dhanbad and CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata.

About Parkinson's disease:

- Parkinson's disease is a common neurodegenerative disease that has no cure.
- It is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement.
- Symptoms start gradually, sometimes starting with a barely noticeable tremor in just one hand.
- Tremors are common, but the disorder also commonly causes stiffness or slowing of movement.
- Common symptoms of the disease include: tremor, slowed movement, rigid muscles, impaired posture and balance, loss of automatic movements, speech changes and writing changes.
- Although there is no medication for this disease, some medicines can help with some of the symptoms.

Finding a cure for Parkinson's disease:

- It is believed that an aggregation of a protein called alpha synuclein (ASyn) plays a crucial role in the pathology of the disease.
- The aggregation is found in abundance in what is called the substantia nigra (SN) portion in the midbrain of patients suffering from Parkinson's disease.
- Many researchers from across the world are studying the mechanism of how the protein forms

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the aggregates, and how the aggregation results in the death of neuronal cells observed in Parkinson's disease.

- They believe that once these mysteries are uncovered, it could help develop a drug for the disease, which is badly needed and has been long overdue.

Dekho Apna Desh

- In a bid to boost tourism in the country, the government has come out with a very creative approach which might cheer travel enthusiasts.
- The Ministry of Tourism has stated that it would reward people who visit at least 15 tourist spots in the country in a year.
- The tourism ministry will fund the travel expenses of tourists who visit 15 destinations in the country in a year and submit the photos on the department's website.
- One needs to travel outside their home state to be eligible.

Context

- Ministry of Tourism brings centuries-old crafts of Mysuru through webinar titled 'Mysuru: Craft Caravan of Karnataka' under "Dekho Apna Desh" series.
- It offered an immersive tour of crafts forms namely Channapatna Toys, Rosewood inlay craft that have been thriving for centuries around the city of Mysuru.

Channapatna Toys

- Channapattana is a city and taluk headquarter in Ramanagara District in Karnataka.
- It is noted for its famous handmade lacquer wooden toys all over the world and hence popularly known as "Gombegala Ooru" or the "Toy-City" of Karnataka.
- Made of aale mara or ivory wood, which is coloured with vegetable dyes, these environment-friendly toys line the streets of the town.

- This traditional craft is protected as a Geographical Indication

- The origin of the wooden toys dates back to the period of Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore who was a great admirer of wooden toys. He took the initiative to invite artisans from Persia and train the local artists to earn the process of making the wooden toys.

Rosewood inlay

- The wooden inlay is the process of decorating the surface of wood by setting in pieces of material such as ivory, bone, plastic, or wood of different colours whose history goes back to the time of Tipu Sultan.
- It is a GI-tagged craft

Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Sachet

- The ICGS Sachet, the first in the series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) has been designed & built indigenously by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and is fitted with state-of-the-art navigation and communication equipment.
- The ship is 105 metre long ship, displaces approximately 2,350 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 KW diesel engines.
- The ship is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift boarding and search & rescue operations.
- The ship is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to undertake oil spill pollution response at sea.
- 'Sachet' meaning alert is a projection of will and commitment of ICG 'to be ever vigilant for serving and protecting' the maritime interest of the Nation.

Significance

- It is a significant contribution to the vision of 'Make in India' and 'Self-reliant India campaign'

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- The ships, on joining the Coast Guard fleet, will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, coastal security and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard charter of duties, to safeguard the maritime interests of the Nation

Sikkim Statehood Day

What's in News?

PM greets people of **Sikkim on their Statehood Day**.

Details:

- On **16 May 1975**, Sikkim became the **22nd state of the Indian Union**, and the monarchy was abolished.
- To enable the incorporation of the new state, the Parliament amended the Indian Constitution.

History:

- The Kingdom of Sikkim was founded by the **Namgyal dynasty in the 17th century**. It was ruled by a **Buddhist priest-king known as the Chogyal**.
- It became a **princely state of British India** in 1890.
- After 1947, Sikkim continued its protectorate status with the Republic of India.
- In 1973, anti-royalist riots took place in front of the Chogyal's palace.
- In 1975, the monarchy was deposed by the people.
- A **referendum** in 1975 led to Sikkim joining India as its 22nd state.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Indian constitution **empowers the Union government to create new states out of existing states or two merge one state with other**. This process is called the reorganisation of the states.

- The basis of reorganisation could be **linguistic, religious, ethnic or administrative**.

- **Article 3 of the Indian Constitution** provides for the formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States.

Atma Nirbhar Bharat scheme

What's in News?

The PM announced an economic stimulus package for **₹20 lakh crore** (estimated at **10% of the GDP**), with a clearly defined leap towards **economic reforms** with an aim to transform the country to **Atmanirbhar Bharat, or a self-reliant, resilient India**.

Highlights of Structural reforms across Eight Sectors:

- Commercial Mining introduced in Coal Sector
- Diversified opportunities in Coal Sector
- Liberalised regime in Coal Sector
- Enhancing Private Investments and Policy Reforms in the Mineral Sector
- Enhancing Self Reliance in Defence Production
- Policy Reforms in Defence Production
- Efficient Airspace Management for Civil Aviation
- More World-Class Airports through PPP
- India to become a global hub for Aircraft Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO)
- Tariff Policy Reform in Power Sector; Privatization of Distribution in UTs
- Boosting private sector investment through revamped Viability Gap Funding Scheme in Social Sector
- Boosting private participation in space activities
- Reforms in Atomic Energy Sector

Operation Samudra Setu

What's in News?

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INS Jalashwa departs **Male** with **Indian Nationals** embarked, in **Operation Samudra Setu Phase-2**.

ARCI scientists develop next-generation biodegradable metal implants

What's in News?

Scientists at the **International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI)** and **Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute of Medical Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram** both **autonomous institutes under the Department of Science & Technology (DST)** have jointly **developed new generation Iron-Manganese based alloys for biodegradable metal implants** for use in humans.

Details:

- **Iron-Manganese based alloy Fe-Mn** is a promising **biodegradable metallic implant**.
- It exhibits a single austenitic phase (a **non-magnetic form of iron**) with MRI compatibility.

Significance:

- Biodegradable materials (Fe, Mg, Zn, and polymer) can **participate in the healing process** and then **degrade gradually** by maintaining mechanical integrity **without leaving any implant residues in the human body**.
- These are better alternatives to currently used metallic implants.
- **Metallic implants remain permanently in the human body** and can cause long-term side effects like **systemic toxicity, chronic inflammation, and thrombosis**.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan interacts with PMUY beneficiaries

What's in News?

Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Steel interacted with over **1500 PMUY beneficiaries** across the country.

Details:

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana (PMUY) has completed **four years of its successful journey**.
- It was launched in the year 2016.
- The scheme aims at **distributing LPG connections (clean fuel) to women of BPL families**.

Severe Cyclonic Storm 'AMPHAN'

Context:

Tracking Severe Cyclonic Storm 'AMPHAN'.

Details:

- As per the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) release, the depression over southeast Bay of Bengal (BoB) intensified into a deep depression into cyclonic storm 'AMPHAN' (pronounced as UM-PUN) on 16th May over the central parts of south BoB.
- It further intensified into a severe cyclonic storm in the morning hours of 17th May, and lay centred over the same region near latitude 11.4°N and longitude 86.0°E, about 990 km south of Paradip (Odisha), 1140 km south-southwest of Digha (West Bengal) and 1260 km south-southwest of Khepupara (Bangladesh).
- It is very likely to intensify further into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm during next 12 hours.
- **Forecast:** It is very likely to move nearly northwards slowly during the next 24 hours and then re-curve north-northeastwards and move fast across northwest BoB and cross West Bengal – Bangladesh coasts between Sagar Islands (West Bengal) and Hatiya Islands (Bangladesh) during afternoon/evening of 20th May 2020 as a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm.

Warnings:

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- Rainfall and wind warnings have been given to the UT/state governments concerned.

- Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the Bay of Bengal from 17th to 20th of May, along the coasts of parts of Odisha, West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh coasts.

COVID-19 Lockdown

Context:

Extension of Lockdown up to May 31, 2020.

Details:

- The government initially announced a lockdown, to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in India, on 24th March.

- This lockdown was extended many times taking into account the situation in the country.

- The government has decided to extend this lockdown till 31st May and have released new guidelines for people to follow.

- Under the new guidelines, States and Union Territories (UTs) will now delineate Red, Green and Orange zones taking into consideration the parameters shared by the Health Ministry.

- The zones can be a district, or a municipal corporation/municipality or even smaller administrative units such as sub-divisions, etc., as decided by States and UTs.

- Within the red and orange zones, containment and buffer zones will be demarcated by the local authorities, after taking into consideration the Health Ministry guidelines.

- Within the **containment zones**, only essential activities shall be allowed. Strict perimeter control shall be maintained, and no movement of persons would be allowed, except for medical emergencies and for maintaining supply of essential goods and services.

- **Buffer zones** are areas adjoining each containment zone, where new cases are more likely to appear. In the buffer zones, more caution needs to be exercised.

Activities Prohibited throughout the Country

- All domestic and international air travel of passengers, except for domestic medical services, domestic air ambulance and for security purposes or purposes as permitted by MHA;

- Metro rail services;

- Running of schools, colleges, educational and training/coaching institutions;

- Hotels, restaurants and other hospitality services, except for the running of canteens in bus depots, railway stations and airports;

- Places of large public gatherings such as cinemas, shopping malls, gymnasiums entertainment parks, etc.;

- Social, political, cultural and similar gatherings and other large congregations; and, access to religious places/places of worship for public.

However, online/distance learning shall be permitted and encouraged; and, restaurants will be allowed to operate kitchens for home delivery of food items.

Activities Permitted with Restrictions

- Sports complexes and stadia will be permitted to open only for sports activities. However, spectators will not be allowed in these complexes.

- Movement of individuals by trains has been permitted.

- Evacuation of foreign nationals from India, return of stranded Indian nationals from abroad, sign-on and sign-off of Indian seafarers, and intra-State and inter-State movement of stranded persons by bus and train will continue to be allowed.

- Inter-State movement of vehicles and buses has also been allowed with mutual consent of the concerned States/UTs. Intra-State movement of vehicles and buses can be decided by the States and UTs.

- Local authorities should ensure that shops and markets open with staggered timings, so as to ensure social distancing.

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- Night Curfew shall continue to remain in force on the movement of individuals, for all non-essential activities, between 7 pm and 7 am.

- Vulnerable persons, i.e., persons above 65 years of age, persons with co-morbidities, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 years, shall stay at home, except for meeting essential requirements and for health purposes.

National Directives for COVID-19 Management

These guidelines apply to public places and work places.

- Wearing of face covers is compulsory;
- Spitting will be punishable with fine as may be prescribed in accordance with its laws, rules or regulations by the State/UT local authority;
- Social distancing is to be followed by all persons in public places and in transport;
- Marriage-related gathering shall not have more than 50 guests;
- For funerals/last rites, the maximum number of persons allowed has been kept at 20;
- Consumption of liquor, paan, gutkha and tobacco, etc., is not allowed in public places.
- **For work places:**
 - The practice of work from home (WfH) should be followed to the extent possible; and staggering of work hours should be adopted in respect of all offices and other establishments.
 - There should be provision for thermal scanning, hand wash and sanitizers at all entry and exit points and common areas; and all work places and other sensitive locations are to be sanitized regularly.
 - In work places, social distancing would also need to be ensured through adequate distance between workers, adequate gaps between shifts, staggering the lunch break of staff and so on.

NIF's Challenge COVID-19 Competition (C3)

Context:

S&T based innovative solutions by common people participating in NIF's Challenge COVID-19 Competition (C3) ready to make a difference.

Details:

- The National Innovation Foundation – India (NIF), an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has identified several S&T based innovative solutions through the **Challenge COVID-19 Competition (C3)**, a campaign which was running for a few days in March and May 2020 for engaging innovative citizens to come up with ideas and innovations to tackle the pandemic.
- NIF is providing incubation and mentoring support for further dissemination to the generator of the ideas.
- A foot-operated device for hand sanitization and washing and an innovative sprayer for sanitization are the two recently supported innovations under the campaign.

Cyclone Amphan

Context:

PM reviews preparations against Cyclone 'Amphan'.

Details:

- The Prime Minister took full stock of the situation and reviewed the response preparedness as well as the evacuation plan presented by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
- The **severe cyclonic storm** 'AMPHAN' over southeast Bay of Bengal is very likely to move nearly northwards slowly and then re-curve north-north-eastwards.
- Odisha is bracing for heavy rain under the influence of the severe cyclonic storm, which is set to skirt away from the State's northern coast to make landfall between West Bengal and Bangladesh.
- The IMD has issued an 'orange alert' expecting heavy to very heavy rainfall in coastal districts.

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Shekatkar Committee

Context:

Government implements Shekatkar Committee recommendations related to creating border infrastructure.

Details:

- The government has accepted and implemented three important recommendations of the **Committee of Experts (CoE)** under the Chairmanship of Lt General D B Shekatkar (Retd.) relating to border Infrastructure.
- These were related to speeding up road construction, leading to socio-economic development in the border areas.
- On the matter related to creating border infrastructure, the Government has implemented the recommendation to outsource road construction work beyond optimal capacity of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- It has been made mandatory to adopt Engineering Procurement Contract (EPC) mode for execution of all works costing more than Rs 100 crore.

About Shekatkar Committee:

- The Shekatkar Committee was set up by former defence minister Manohar Parrikar.
- The committee had submitted its report in December 2016.
- The report, which is now the guiding principle for ongoing defence reforms, has never been made public, because it covers operational aspects of the armed forces, and its disclosure is not in the interests of national security.
- The Defence Ministry is in the process of implementing a slew of reforms suggested by the committee, which studied how to make the armed forces much leaner, cohesive and modern.
- Initially, the Ministry had considered the report and sent 99 recommendations to the armed forces for making an implementation plan.

• In August 2017, the then Defence Minister Arun Jaitley had approved 65 recommendations pertaining to the Indian Army for implementation.

• Some of the recommendations of the Committee include the following:

• India's defence budget should be in the range of 2.5 to 3 per cent of the GDP, keeping in mind possible future threats.

• A Joint Services War College for training middle-level officers should be established.

• It had also recommended that the Military Intelligence School at Pune be converted to a tri-service intelligence training establishment.

• The Committee recommended the enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.

• Other recommendations of the committee that are already being implemented include optimisation of Signals establishments, restructuring of repair echelons, redeployment of Ordnance echelons, better utilisation of supply and transportation echelons and animal transport units, closure of military farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations, enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army, improving the efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.

• The Army has started implementing the Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO) model for its base workshops and ordnance depots, aiming to improve operational efficiency.

• The creation of the post of the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** is also one of the recommendations of the Shekatkar Committee..

National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

Context:

NCMC reviews preparedness as Super Cyclonic Storm 'AMPHAN' set to make landfall on 20th May, 2020.

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About the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC):

- The NCMC was constituted under the Cabinet Secretariat for effective implementation of relief measures in the wake of a natural calamity.
- Headed by the Cabinet Secretary, it is one of the top-level decision-making bodies with respect to disaster management.
- It oversees the command, control and coordination of disaster response.

73rd World Health Assembly

Context:

The Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare participated in the 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA) through video conference.

About the World Health Assembly (WHA):

- The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of World Health Organisation (WHO)
- It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.
- At the Assembly, new health goals are set, and tasks are assigned in order to reach those goals.
- The Health Assembly is held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The 73rd session of the WHA was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initiatives to boost Education Sector

Context:

Union Finance Minister announces several initiatives to boost Education Sector.

Details:

- The initiatives announced under the themes "One nation, One digital platform" and "one class one channel" are aimed at boosting the access and equity in education and improving the gross enrolment ratio.
- A comprehensive initiative called **PM e-VIDYA** will be launched which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education. This will enable multi-mode access to education, and includes:
 - DIKSHA (one nation-one digital platform) which will now become the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content in school education for all the states/UTs.
 - TV (one class-one channel) where one dedicated channel per grade for each of the classes 1 to 12 will provide access to quality educational material.
 - SWAYAM online courses in MOOCS format for school and higher education.
 - IITPAL for IITJEE/NEET preparation.
 - Air through Community radio and CBSE Shiksha Vani podcast.
 - Study material for the differently-abled developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/YouTube.
- The **Manodarpan initiative** is being launched to provide psychosocial support through a website, a toll-free helpline, national directory of counsellors, interactive chat platform, etc. This initiative will benefit all school going children in the country, along with their parents, teachers and the community of stakeholders in school education.
- The government is expanding e-learning in higher education – by liberalizing open, distance and online education regulatory framework.
- The top 100 universities will start online courses.
- Also, online component in conventional Universities and ODL programmes will also be raised from present 20% to 40%.

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- This will provide enhanced learning opportunities to nearly 7 crore students across different colleges and Universities.
- It has been decided to prepare a new National Curriculum and Pedagogical Framework for school education, teacher education and early childhood stage to prepare students and future teachers as per global benchmarks.
- The curriculum will be rooted in the Indian ethos and integrated with global skill requirement.
- The focus will be on promoting critical thinking, creative and communication skills, along with experiential and joyful learning for the students focussing on learning outcomes.
- A National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission will be launched, for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy in Grade 3 by 2025.

Cyclone Amphan

Context:

Cyclone Warning for West Bengal and north Odisha coasts: Orange Message.

Details:

- The Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm 'AMPHAN' over west-central Bay of Bengal moved nearly northwards with a speed of 17 kmph and lay centred over west-central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal, about 320 km nearly south of Paradip (Odisha), 470 km south-southwest of Digha (West Bengal) and 610 km south-southwest of Khepupara (Bangladesh).
- The cyclone is expected to make landfall in West Bengal on 20th May afternoon, as per the latest updates.

National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)

Context:

Mother Dairy, a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), contributed in stabilizing the dairy supply chain in Vidarbha and Marathwada Region amid the Lockdown.

About the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB):

- The NDDB is an institution of national importance set up by an Act of Parliament of India.
- It was created to promote, finance and support producer-owned and controlled organisations.
- NDDB's programmes and activities seek to strengthen farmer cooperatives and support national policies that are favourable to the growth of such institutions.
- Fundamental to NDDB's efforts are cooperative principles and cooperative strategies.
- The Board was founded in 1965 to transform dairying into an instrument for the development of India's rural people.
- NDDB began its operations with the mission of making dairying a vehicle to a better future for millions of grassroots milk producers.
- The mission achieved thrust and direction with the launching of "Operation Flood", a programme extending over 26 years and which used World Bank loan to finance India's emergence as the world's largest milk producing nation.
- The National Dairy Development Board (initially registered as a society under the Societies Act 1860), was merged with the erstwhile Indian Dairy Corporation, a company formed and registered under the Companies Act 1956, by the NDDB Act 1987, with effect from October 1987. The new body corporate was declared an institution of national importance by the Act.
- The first chairman of the NDDB was Dr. V Kurien, the father of India's White Revolution.

Indian Railway

Context:

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Indian Railways operationalises its most powerful 12000 HP 'made in India' locomotive.

Details:

- The First 12000 HP 'made in India' locomotive, manufactured by Madhepura Electric Loco Factory situated in Bihar, was put into operation by the Indian Railway.
- The locomotive is named WAG12 with Number 60027.
- With this, India has become the 6th country in the world to join the elite club of countries producing high horse power locomotive indigenously.
- It is the first time that a high horse power locomotive has been operationalised on broad gauge track in the world.
- The locomotive has been produced under the Make in India.

Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities

Context:

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs announces results of Star rating of garbage free cities.

Details:

- For the assessment year 2019-2020, a total of six cities have been certified as 5-Star, 65 cities as 3-Star and 70 cities as 1-Star.
- The **Star Rating Protocol** was launched by the Ministry in January 2018 to institutionalize a mechanism for cities to achieve Garbage Free status, and to motivate cities to achieve higher degrees of cleanliness.
- The protocol has been devised in a holistic manner including components such as cleanliness of drains & water bodies, plastic waste management, managing construction & demolition waste, etc. which are critical drivers for achieving garbage free cities.
- While the key thrust of this protocol is on Solid Waste Management, it also takes care of ensuring

certain minimum standards of sanitation through a set of prerequisites defined in the framework.

- In the recent phase of Star Rating Assessment, 1435 cities had applied.
- Cities which achieved the 5-Star status:
 - Ambikapur – Chhattisgarh
 - Rajkot – Gujarat
 - Surat – Gujarat
 - Mysore – Karnataka
 - Indore – Madhya Pradesh
 - Navi Mumbai – Maharashtra

Ayushman Bharat

Context:

Prime Minister interacts with the One Croreth Beneficiary of the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

About Ayushman Bharat:

- Launched in 2018, Ayushman Bharat is an umbrella health scheme to address health issues at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary.

Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS)

Context:

Cabinet approves modifications in the existing "Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS)".

Details:

- The Union Cabinet has approved the sovereign portfolio guarantee of up to 20% of first loss for purchase of Bonds or Commercial Papers (CPs) with a rating of AA and below (including unrated paper with original/initial maturity of up to one year) issued by NBFCs/MFCs/Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) by Public Sector Banks (PSBs) through an extension of the Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS).
- The Cabinet also approved modifications in the existing PCGS on purchase of pooled assets, increasing its coverage by:

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- Making NBFCs/HFCs reported under SMA-1 category on technical reasons alone during the last one year period prior to 1.8.2018 eligible. Earlier NBFCs/HFCs reported as SMA-1 or SMA-2 during this period were ineligible under the Scheme.
- Relaxing the net profit criteria to the extent that the concerned NBFC/HFC should now have made a profit in at least one of the financial years of FY2017-18, FY 2018-19 and 2019-20. Earlier, the NBFC/HFC should have made a net profit in at least one of the financial years of FY 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- Relaxing the criteria regarding date of origination of assets to include new assets originating up to at least six months prior to the date of the initial pool rating. Earlier, only assets originated up to 31.3.2019 were eligible under the Scheme.
- Extending the Scheme from 30.6.2020 to 31.3.2021 for purchase of pooled assets.
- The existing PCGS was issued on 11.12.2019 offering sovereign guarantee of up to 10% of first loss to PSBs for purchasing pooled assets worth rated BBB+ or above worth up to Rs. 1,00,000 crore, from financially sound NBFCs/MFCs.
- The outbreak of COVID-19 along with the lockdown of business activity has now necessitated the adoption of additional measures to support NBFCs and HFCs – **On the liabilities side** by providing a sovereign guarantee to cover purchase of Bonds/CPs issued by NBFCs/HFCs as well as MFIs which also play a critical role in extending credit to small borrowers; and **on the assets side** by modifying the existing PCGS to widen its coverage.
- The window for this one-time partial credit guarantee offered by the government will remain open till 31st March, 2021 for the purchase of pooled assets and for the period as specified under the Scheme for purchase of Bonds/CPs, or till such date by which Rs.10,000 crore worth of guarantees, including both guarantees toward purchase of pooled assets and Bonds/CPs, are provided by the Government, whichever is earlier.

Reasons for this modification

- The COVID-19 crisis and the consequent lockdown restrictions are likely to have a negative impact on both collections and fresh loan disbursements, besides a deleterious effect on the overall economy.
- This is anticipated to result not only in asset quality issues for the NBFC/HFC/MFI sector, but also low loan growth as well as higher borrowing costs for the sector, with a cascading effect on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) which borrow from them.
- While the RBI moratorium provides some relief on the assets side, it is on the liabilities side that the sector is likely to face increasing challenges.
- The extension of the existing Scheme will address the liability side concerns.
- In addition, modifications in the existing PCGS will enable wider coverage of the Scheme on the asset side also.
- Since NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs play a crucial role in sustaining consumption demand as well as capital formation in small and medium segment, it is essential that they continue to get funding without disruption, and the extended PCGS is expected to systematically enable the same.

Special Liquidity Scheme for NBFCs/HFCs

Context:

Cabinet approves Special Liquidity Scheme for NBFCs/HFCs to address their Liquidity Stress.

Details:

- Under this scheme an SPV would be set up to manage a Stressed Asset Fund (SAF) whose special securities would be guaranteed by the GOI and purchased by the RBI only.
- The proceeds of sale of such securities would be used by the SPV to acquire short-term debt of NBFCs/HFCs.

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- The Scheme will be administered by the Department of Financial Services, which will issue the detailed guidelines.

• Implementation schedule:

- A large public sector bank would set up an SPV to manage a stressed asset fund which would issue interest bearing special securities guaranteed by the Government of India, to be purchased by RBI only.

- The SPV would issue securities as per requirement subject to the total amount of securities outstanding not exceeding Rs. 30,000 crore to be extended by the amount required as per the need.

- The securities issued by the SPV would be purchased by RBI and proceeds thereof would be used by the SPV to acquire the debt of at least investment grade of short duration (residual maturity of up to 3 months) of eligible NBFCs/HFCs.

• Impact:

- The proposed scheme would be a one-stop arrangement between the SPV and the NBFCs without having to liquidate their current asset portfolio.

- The scheme would also act as an enabler for the NBFC to get investment grade or better rating for bonds issued.

- The scheme is likely to be easier to operate and also augment the flow of funds from the non-bank sector.

- The Scheme would benefit the real economy by augmenting the lending resources of NBFCs/HFCs/MFIs.

Scheme for formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (FME)

Context:

Cabinet approves "Scheme for formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (FME)".

Details:

- This is a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the unorganised sector with an initial outlay of Rs.10000 crore.

- The expenditure will be shared by the centre and states in the ratio 60:40.

- 2,00,000 micro-enterprises are to be assisted with credit-linked subsidy.

- Scheme will be implemented over a 5-year period from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

- There will be an extensive focus on perishables.

- Micro enterprises will get credit-linked subsidy @ 35% of the eligible project cost with ceiling of Rs.10 lakh.

- Beneficiary contribution will be minimum 10% and balance from the loan

- On-site skill training & handholding for DPR and technical upgradation.

- The project is likely to generate nine lakh skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

- Support to FPOs/SHGs/cooperatives:

- Seed capital to SHGs for loan to members for working capital and small tools.

- Grant for backward/forward linkages, common infrastructure, packaging, marketing & branding.

- Skill training & Handholding support.

- Credit linked capital subsidy.

Background:

- There are about 25 lakh unregistered food processing enterprises which constitute 98% of the sector and are unorganized and informal. Nearly 66 % of these units are located in rural areas and about 80% of them are family-based enterprises.

- This sector faces a number of challenges including the inability to access credit, high cost of institutional credit, lack of access to modern technology, inability to integrate with the food supply chain and compliance with the health & safety standards.

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- Strengthening this segment will lead to reduction in wastage, creation of off-farm job opportunities and aid in achieving the government objective of doubling farmers' income.

Objective of the scheme:

- Increase in access to finance by micro food processing units.
- Increase in revenues of target enterprises.
- Enhanced compliance with food quality and safety standards.
- Strengthening capacities of support systems.
- Transition from the unorganized sector to the formal sector.
- Special focus on women entrepreneurs and Aspirational districts.
- Encourage Waste to Wealth activities.
- Focus on minor forest produce in Tribal Districts.

Implantation mechanism:

- The Scheme would be monitored at Centre by an Inter-Ministerial Empowered Committee (IMEC) under the Chairmanship of Minister, FPI.
- A State/UT Level Committee (SLC) chaired by the Chief Secretary will monitor and sanction/recommend proposals for expansion of micro units and setting up of new units by the SHGs/FPOs/Cooperatives.
- The State/UT Government will notify a Nodal Department and Agency for implementation of the Scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)

Context:

Cabinet approves extension of 'Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana'.

Details:

The PMVVY has been extended for a further three years until 31st March, 2023.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Context:

Cabinet approves 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana – A scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India.

About the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana:

- The objective of the scheme is to supplement or increase agriculture, modernize processing and decrease agricultural-waste and to utilize the potential in the fishery sector.
- The scheme will be implemented under two components namely, Central Sector Scheme (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) at a total estimated investment of Rs. 20,050 crore.
- The Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) Component is further segregated into Non-beneficiary oriented and Beneficiary orientated subcomponents/activities under the following three broad heads:
 - Enhancement of Production and Productivity
 - Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Management
 - Fisheries Management and Regulatory Framework

Benefits of the scheme:

- Address the critical gaps in the fisheries sector and realize its potential.
- Augmenting fish production and productivity at a sustained average annual growth rate of about 9% to achieve a target of 22 million metric tons by 2024-25 through sustainable and responsible fishing practices.
- Improving availability of certified quality fish seed and feed, traceability in fish and including effective aquatic health management.
- Creation of critical infrastructure including modernisation and strengthening of value chain.

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- Creation of direct gainful employment opportunities to about 15 lakh fishers, fish farmers, fish workers, fish vendors and other rural/urban populations in fishing and allied activities and about thrice this number as indirect employment opportunities including enhancement of their incomes.
- Boost to investments in the fisheries sector and increase of competitiveness of fish and fisheries products.
- Doubling of fishers, fish farmers and fish workers incomes by 2024.
- Social, physical and economic security for fishers and fish workers.

Solarisation of towns

Context:

Government of India launches scheme for 100% solarisation of Konark Sun Temple & Konark town.

Details:

- The Scheme envisages setting up of 10 MW grid connected solar project and various solar off-grid applications like solar trees, solar drinking water kiosks, off-grid solar power plants with battery storage, etc. with a 100% Central Financial Assistance (CFA) support of around Rs. 25 Crores from the Government of India through the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- Implementation of this Project will be done by Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA).
- The Scheme will meet all the energy requirements of Konark town with solar energy.

Agappe Chitra Magna

Context:

SCTIMST to organize commercial launch of Agappe Chitra Magna for detection of COVID-19.

Details:

- Agappe Chitra Magna is a magnetic nanoparticle-based RNA extraction kit for use during testing for the detection of COVID-19.
- It is developed by Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST) along with Agappe Diagnostics Ltd, an in vitro diagnostics manufacturing company based in Cochin.
- Located in Thiruvananthapuram, the SCTIMST is an Institute of National Importance of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- The Chitra Magna, an innovative RNA extraction kit developed by SCTIMST was transferred to Agappe Diagnostics in April 2020, and will now be available in the market as Agappe Chitra Magna RNA Isolation Kit.
- This product has been independently validated at the National Institute of Virology for COVID-19 RNA isolation.
- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has given approval for the commercialization of this kit.
- The kit can be used for RNA extraction for RT-LAMP, RT-qPCR, RT-PCR and other isothermal and PCR based protocols for the detection of SARS-COV-2.
- It uses an innovative technology for isolating RNA using magnetic nanoparticles to capture the RNA from the patient sample.
- The magnetic nanoparticle beads bind to the viral RNA and, when exposed to a magnetic field, give a highly purified and concentrated RNA.
- As the sensitivity of the detection method is dependent on getting an adequate quantity of viral RNA, this innovation enhances the chances of identifying positive cases.
- It is estimated that India would require about 8 lakh RNA extraction kits per month during the next six months.
- Agappe Chitra Magna RNA Isolation Kit priced at around Rs. 150 per kit is expected to reduce the cost of testing and the country's dependence on imported kits which cost around Rs 300.

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- Agappe Diagnostics has a manufacturing capacity of 3 lakh kits per month.

Ecologically Sensitive Area of Western Ghats

Context:

States express desire to expedite early notification of Ecologically Sensitive Area of Western Ghats.

Details:

- To conserve and protect the biodiversity of the Western Ghats while allowing for sustainable and inclusive development of the region, the Government of India had constituted a High Level Working Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. Kasturirangan.
- The Committee had recommended that identified geographical areas falling in the six States of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu may be declared as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA).
- A draft notification was issued in October 2018 mentioning the areas to be notified in the ESA.

Ecologically Sensitive Areas:

- In the ESA, all kinds of mining activities, thermal power plants and highly polluting industries are not allowed.
- They are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- **Objectives of declaring areas as ESA:**
 - To manage and regulate the activities around these areas with the intention of creating some kinds of 'shock absorbers'.
 - To provide for a transition zone between the highly protected and relatively less protected areas.
 - To give effect to Section 3(2)(v) of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 which restricts the operation of industries or processes to be carried out in certain areas or to maintain certain safeguards to operate industries.

- In order to make it a mandate on the states.
- They are significant in order to minimise the impact of urbanisation and other developmental activities in these sensitive areas.
- They also decrease forest depletion and man-animal conflicts.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

Context:

6.8 Crore free LPG cylinders distributed among the PMUY beneficiaries so far.

Alzheimer's disease

Context:

IIT Guwahati discovers new ways to prevent memory loss due to Alzheimer's.

Details:

- Researchers at IIT Guwahati have come up with unique ideas that can help prevent or reduce short-term memory losses associated with Alzheimer's disease.
- They studied the neurochemical principles of Alzheimer's, and explored new ways to prevent accumulation of neurotoxic molecules in the brain that are associated with short-term memory loss.
- The team reports interesting methods such as application of low-voltage electric field, and the use of 'trojan peptides' to arrest aggregation of neurotoxic molecules in the brain.
- A defining hallmark of Alzheimer's is the accumulation of amyloid beta peptides in the brain. The researchers seek methods to reduce the accumulation of these peptides, in order to arrest the progression of Alzheimer's.
- Scientists found that application of a low-voltage, safe electrical field can reduce the formation and accumulation of toxic neurodegenerative molecules that cause short-term memory loss in Alzheimer's disease.

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- They found that external electric/magnetic field modulates the structure of these peptide molecules, thereby preventing aggregation.
- They also explored the possibility of using 'Trojan peptides' to arrest aggregation of these neurotoxic molecules.
- The idea of using 'Trojan peptide' comes from mythological "Trojan Horse" used as subterfuge by the Greeks in the battle of Troy.
- The researchers have designed Trojan peptides by adopting a similar approach of 'deceit' to impede the aggregation of the amyloid peptide, arrest the formation of toxic fibrillar assemblies, and reduce poisoning of nerve cells that leads to memory loss.
- **Significance of the research:**
 - The development of a cure for Alzheimer's disease assumes importance for India as it has the third-highest number of Alzheimer's patients in the world, after China and US, with more than four million people falling prey to the memory loss associated with it.
 - While current treatments only alleviate some of the symptoms of the disease, there is no disruptive therapeutic approach yet that can treat the underlying causes of Alzheimer's.

Crop residue burning

Context:

Alternative dwarfing genes in wheat can eliminate rice crop residue burning.

Background:

- In India, close to twenty-three million tonnes of leftover rice residues are annually burnt by farmers to get rid of the straw and prepare their fields for sowing wheat, which is the next crop, resulting in air pollution.
- Also, dry environments pose a challenge for the germination of wheat varieties with short coleoptile.

- The burning of leftover rice crop residue has serious implications for the environment, soil, and human health.

Alternate dwarfing genes in wheat:

- To overcome the problems caused by the burning of rice crop residue, scientists from the Agharkar Research Institute (ARI-Pune), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, have mapped two alternative dwarfing genes Rht14 and Rht18 in wheat.
- These genes are associated with better seedling vigour and longer coleoptiles (sheath protecting the young shoot tip).
- The scientists have mapped the dwarfing genes on chromosome 6A in durum wheat, and DNA-based markers were developed for a better selection of these genes in wheat breeding lines.
- The DNA-based markers will help wheat breeders to precisely select wheat lines carrying these alternative dwarfing genes from a massive pool of wheat breeding lines.
- These DNA based markers are being used at ARI for marker-assisted transfer of these genes in Indian wheat varieties, so as to make them suitable for sowing under rice stubble-retained conditions and dry environments.
- Wheat breeding lines with these alternative dwarfing genes are presently at an advanced stage.
- Wheat lines with these alternative dwarfing genes, apart from reducing crop residue burning, can allow deeper sowing of wheat seeds to avail advantage of residual moisture in the soil under dry environments.
- The presently available semi-dwarf wheat varieties, which were explored during the Green Revolution, carry conventional Rht1 dwarfing alleles (variant form of a given gene) and produce optimum yields under high-fertility irrigated conditions.
- However, they are not well adapted for deeper sowing conditions in dry environments due to

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shorter coleoptiles, and low early vigour often results into reduced seedling emergence.

- Moreover, crop stands of Rht1 wheat also remain poor where previous crop residues pose a barrier for seedling emergence due to the short coleoptiles.

- Since rice crop residue burning has adverse effects, there is a need to include alternative dwarfing genes in wheat improvement programs.

- Also, only two dwarfing alleles of Rht1 are predominant in Indian wheat varieties; therefore, there is a need to diversify the genetic base of dwarfing genes considering diverse wheat growing zones in India.

- **Benefits of the improved wheat lines:**

- The improved wheat lines which are being developed at ARI will help reducing stubble burning incidences under the rice-wheat cropping system.

- These lines will also allow deeper sowing of wheat seeds to avail advantage of residual moisture in the soil, therefore, saving valuable water resources and reduce the cost of cultivation to farmers.

Textiles Committee

Context:

Textiles Committee comes up with fully indigenous Design and Make in India PPE Testing Equipment.

About the Textiles Committee:

- The Textiles Committee is a statutory body established in 1963 through an Act of Parliament and is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

- It has been formed to ensure the quality of textiles and textile machinery both for internal consumption and export purpose.

- The Committee is tasked with the functions of establishing laboratories for the testing of textiles and textile machinery and providing for their inspection and examination, besides other

functions which flow from the main objective of ensuring quality of textiles products and textiles machinery.

Quantum Entanglement

Context:

Certifying Quantum Entanglement: A step towards Quantum Security.

Details:

- Scientists from S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS), Kolkata, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology have developed a novel protocol to find out whether a pair of electrons is in an entangled state so that they can be safely used as resources for facilitating quantum information processing tasks.

- The protocol has been developed through theoretical and experimental analysis.

- **Quantum entanglement** is one of the peculiarities of quantum mechanics, which makes phenomena such as quantum teleportation and super-dense coding possible.

- It is the physical phenomenon that occurs when a pair or group of particles is generated, interact, in a way such that the quantum state of each particle of the pair or group cannot be described independently of the state of the others.

- Entangled states are key resources to facilitate many quantum information processing tasks and quantum cryptographic protocols.

- However, entanglement is fragile and is easily lost during the transit of photons through the environment.

- Hence, it is extremely important to know whether a pair of photons is entangled, in order to use them as resource.

- Verification of entanglement requires the use of measurement devices, but such devices may be hacked or compromised by eavesdroppers.

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- **Device-independent self-testing (DIST)** is a method that can be used in order to overcome such a possibility.
- This method enables the verification of entanglement in an unknown quantum state of two photons without having direct access to the state, or complete trust in the measurement devices.
- The theory relies on the application of the quantum uncertainty principle while implementing full device independence is a difficult task.
- In several practical situations, one of the parties may be fully trusted, whereas, the other may not be trusted like in the case of server-client relationship in banking transactions.
- For such situations, quantum information theory enables one-sided DIST (1sDIST).
- In the protocol published, the theoretical idea is based on applying the fine-grained uncertainty relation to perform quantum steering.
- This idea has been successfully implemented experimentally by his team in collaboration with a group in Beijing Computational Science Research Centre, and Key Laboratory of Quantum Information, Hefei.
- The experiment uses an all-optical set-up in which entangled pairs of photons are created by laser light on Beta barium borate (BBO) crystals, a nonlinear optical crystal, used as laser crystal.
- The team used Bob as the trusted party and Alice as untrusted, to verify that the pair of photons they share is entangled.
- In a single run of their experiment, one photon goes to Alice's lab (bottom left), and another to Bob's lab (top right).
- They implemented several optical operations using beam-splitters, phase-shifters, and quantum gate operations before the photons were detected.
- Using the detection statistics, the team not only certified the presence of entanglement but also determined the magnitude of entanglement in the photon pairs with minimum error.

- The team concluded that the entangled pairs of photons generated by the laser and BBO crystals can be reliably used to perform secure communication tasks.

Cyclone Amphan

What's in News?

Prime Minister conducted an **aerial survey of areas of Odisha and West Bengal affected by Cyclone Amphan.**

- Rs 500 crore financial assistance was announced for Odisha.
- 1,000 crore for was announced for immediate relief activities in the State of West Bengal.

PM-KISAN

What's in News?

The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare is taking several **measures to facilitate the farmers and farming activities at field level** during the lockdown period in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic.

- Under the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)** Scheme during the lockdown period from 24.3.2020 till date, about 55 crore farmer families have been benefitted.

Government is promoting Beekeeping as part of its aim to double farmers' income

What's in News?

A webinar was conducted by the **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)** on the theme **"Sweet Revolution and Atma Nirbhar Bharat"**.

- The objective was to **popularize scientific beekeeping as source of livelihood** for landless rural poor, small and marginal famers to supplement agricultural income, as also as **tool to**

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enhance agriculture and horticulture production.

- Issues before beekeepers such as **promotion of scientific beekeeping, quality assurance, minimum support price, transport of bee colonies, processing, packaging, branding, testing, organic certification of honey and different beehive products** were discussed.

- Successful beekeepers and entrepreneurs from Kashmir, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh shared their experiences and suggested ways forward to bring about the Sweet Revolution.

Details:

- The Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare has said the **Government is promoting Beekeeping as part of its aim to double farmers' income.**

- The Government has allocated **500 crore** towards **Beekeeping** under the **Atma Nirbhar Abhiyan.**

- **National Bee Board** has created four modules to impart training as part of the **National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)** and 30 lakh farmers have been trained in beekeeping. They are also being financially supported by the Government.

- The Government has launched '**Honey Mission**' as part of '**Sweet Revolution**'.

- **India is among the world's top five honey producers.**

- Compared to 2005-06 **honey production** has risen by **242%** and exports shot by **265%**.

Central Warehouse Corporation

What's in News?

The **Central Warehouse Corporation (CWC)** achieved highest ever turnover of about Rs.1710 Crore during 2019-20.

- CWC is a Schedule 'A'-**Mini Ratna**, Category – 1 Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE).

- It is a **statutory body** which was established under 'The Warehousing Corporations Act, 1962'.

- It is a **public warehouse operator** offering logistics services to diverse group of clients

- Its aim is to provide **reliable, cost-effective, value-added, integrated warehousing and logistics solution in a socially responsible and environment friendly manner.**

UMANG Application

What's in News?

The following 7 services hosted on the web site of India Meteorological Department (IMD) have been on boarded to the **Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG)** application.

Details:

- IMD has taken various initiatives in recent years for **improvement in dissemination of weather forecast and warning services based on latest tools and technologies.**

- To further enhance this initiative, IMD has taken the leverage of **Digital India Programme** to utilise "UMANG App".

The following 7 services hosted on web site of IMD have been on boarded to UMANG Application:

- **Current Weather** – Current temperature, humidity, wind speed, direction for 150 cities are updated 8 times a day.

- **Nowcast** – Three hourly warnings of localized weather phenomena and their intensity is issued for about 800 stations, and districts of India by State Meteorological Centres of IMD.

- **City Forecast** – Past 24 hours and 7 day forecast of weather conditions around 450 cities in India are given.

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- **Rainfall Information**— All India district Rainfall information daily, weekly, monthly and cumulative series are available.
- **Tourism Forecast** – Past 24 hours and 7 day forecast of weather conditions of around 100 Tourist cities in India are provided.
- **Warnings** – Alerts are issued to warn citizens of approaching dangerous weather. It is colour coded in Red, Orange and yellow.
- **Cyclone** – Cyclone warnings and alerts provides the track of cyclonic storms along with likely time and point of crossing of coast.

UMANG:

- UMANG is an **all-in-one single, unified, secure, multi-channel, multi-platform, multi-lingual, multi-service mobile app**, powered by a robust back-end platform providing access to high impact services of various organization (Central and State).
- The UMANG App was **launched in 2017 to bring all government services on a single mobile app**, with a larger goal to make the government accessible on the mobile phones.

International Day for Biological Diversity 2020

What's in News?

In a virtual celebration of the **International Day for Biological Diversity 2020**, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched key initiatives towards conservation of biodiversity.

- The year 2020 which is also the **"SUPER YEAR FOR BIODIVERSITY"**, as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity with **20 global Aichi targets adopted in 2010 ends in 2020** and all the countries together are in the process of preparation of Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Details:

- The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) **Biodiversity Samrakshan Internship Programme was launched**.

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) **Campaign on Illegal Trafficking of Endangered Species: 'Not all Animals Migrate by Choice' was launched**.

- The campaign 'Not all Animals Migrate by Choice', launched by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, with UNEP, seeks to address these environmental challenges, to raise awareness, and to advocate solutions.

- A Webinar Series on **'Biodiversity Conservation and Biological Diversity Act, 2002'** was also launched along with the WWF Model Conference of Parties (MCoP), an initiative which involves the younger generation so they can usher in a new beginning and engage in conversations around impact of humanity's footprint on biodiversity and also the importance of sustenance of biodiversity for our own survival.

- An awareness campaign supported by WWF to highlight the crucial role played by nature through its free ecological services provided for humankind was also launched.

International Day for Biological Diversity:

- The United Nations has proclaimed **May 22nd as the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB)** to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

- The theme for International Day for Biological Diversity 2020 is **"Our solutions are in nature"**.

Aichi Target:

The Aichi Targets were adopted at the **Nagoya conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. In the conference of parties (COP-10), the parties agreed to come up with new plans and targets as the previous targets on biodiversity protection were not achieved. The short-term plan which consists of 5 strategic goals

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and further sub divided into 20 ambitious targets is collectively known as Aichi targets.

- **Strategic Goal A:** Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.
- **Strategic Goal B:** Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.
- **Strategic Goal C:** Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.
- **Strategic Goal D:** Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **Strategic Goal E:** Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan elected as Chair of Executive Board of WHO

What's in News?

The Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan has been elected as Chair of the Executive Board of World Health Organization for the year 2020-21. This took place during the 147th session of the Executive Board, in a meeting that was virtually held.

- Harsh Vardhan has also been a member of several prestigious committees of WHO like Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) and the Global Technical Consultative Group (TCG) on Polio Eradication.
- He has also served as an Advisor to the WHO.

Executive Board of WHO:

- The Executive Board of WHO is composed of **34 technically qualified members** elected for **three-year term**.
- The main functions of the Board are to **implement the decisions and policies of the Health Assembly, and advise and facilitate its work**.

Garbage Free City Star Rating

What's in News?

Navi Mumbai has been **rated 5-star in the new list of garbage free cities under the Star Rating Protocol of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs for the assessment year 2019-2020**.

- A crucial factor which has helped the city clinch the award is the **use of technology for garbage collection, enabling 100 per cent garbage pick-up**.
- Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has a robust system of tracking each and every trash bin in the city. There are **microchips affixed to every bin**; the civic body uses GPS mechanism to track garbage collection.
- NMMC uses waste trucks take rounds every eight hours.
- All these trucks are equipped with **Radio-frequency identification (RFID) chips, GPS and GPRS and their movement, route and location are tracked through an app**.

Garbage Free City Star Rating:

- **The Star Rating Protocol has been devised in a holistic manner including** components such as cleanliness of drains and water bodies, plastic waste management, managing construction & demolition waste, etc. which are **critical drivers for achieving garbage free cities**.
- While the key thrust of this protocol is on **Solid Waste Management**, it also takes care of ensuring certain **minimum standards of sanitation through a set of prerequisites defined in the framework**.

NTPC in pact with ONGC to set up Joint Venture Company for Renewable Energy Business

What's in News?

National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC Ltd.), the PSU under Ministry of Power and

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Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), the PSU under Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up a **Joint Venture Company for Renewable Energy business.**

- The MoU will enable both companies to **accelerate their footprint in Renewable Energy.**
- As per the MoU, NTPC and ONGC will explore the setting up of **offshore wind and other Renewable Energy Projects in India and overseas.**
- They shall also explore opportunities in the fields of **sustainability, storage, E-mobility and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) compliant projects.**

Details:

- NTPC presently has 920 MW of installed Renewable power projects in its portfolio and about 2300 MW of RE projects under construction.
- With this tie-up, NTPC would accelerate its RE capacity addition program and also expand its footprint in offshore wind and overseas Renewable Energy projects.
- This will help India's largest power generator achieve its **ambitious target of 32 GW of Renewable Energy Projects by 2032.**
- ONGC has a renewable portfolio of 176 MW comprising of 153 MW wind power and 23 MW of solar.
- This development will enhance the presence of ONGC in the Renewable Power business and enable its ambition to add 10 GW of renewable power to its portfolio by 2040.

IASST develops electrochemical sensing platform for detecting carcinogenic & mutagenic compounds in food

What's in News?

Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati, has developed an electrochemical sensing platform for detecting **carcinogenic or mutagenic compound N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) and N-nitrosodiethanolamine (NDEA).**

- It was achieved by developing a **modified electrode by immobilizing carbon nanomaterials (carbon dots) in DNA.**
- The electrochemical biosensor platform was developed **using the ability of NDMA and NDEA, to alter the DNA.**
- The scientists took advantage of the fact that out of the base pairs A, T, G, C, **Guanine (G) is electrochemically active.**
- The DNA adducts formed are electrochemically active, which ultimately leads to an increase in peak current in electrochemical set-up, helping in the detection of the chemicals.
- **Carbon dots (CDs), a carbon-based nanomaterial, was used, which is already established as a biocompatible and environmentally friendly material.**
- Naturally derived chitosan, (natural biopolymer obtained from the shells of shrimp, lobster, and crabs) is an environment-friendly sustainable material that was used to synthesize CDs.

Significance:

- The scientists pointed out that **with changing food habits of urban Indians, they are exposed to harmful chemicals** belonging to Nitrosamine family in cured meats, bacon, some cheese, low-fat dry milk, and fish. Such chemicals include **carcinogenic ones like NDMA and NDEA**, which may also alter the chemical composition of our DNA.
- Hence it is important to **develop detection techniques to detect them.**

Mission Sagar

What's in News?

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As part of **Mission Sagar**, Indian Naval Ship **Kesari** has entered Port Louis in Mauritius.

Details:

- The Government of India is providing assistance to friendly foreign countries in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and towards this, Indian Naval Ship Kesari is carrying COVID-related **essential medicines and a special consignment of Ayurvedic medicines for the people of Mauritius**.
- **Mission Sagar**, is in consonance with the **Prime Minister's vision of Security And Growth for All in the Region – 'SAGAR'**.
- This mission highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with the countries of the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** and builds on the excellent relations existing between the two countries to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Mission SAGAR has also included supplies for Maldives, Madagascar, Seychelles and Comoros to jointly meet the common challenges during the ongoing pandemic.
- The operation is being progressed in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.

India-Mauritius Relations:

- It may be recalled that the first consignment of 13 tonnes of essential medicines from India had arrived on 15 April, 2020 through the special Air India flight to Mauritius.
- This shipment again underscores the special and unique ties between India and Mauritius and their **longstanding partnership in the public health care sector**.

World Turtle Day

What's in News?

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), along with the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, its project partner in the '**Biodiversity**

Conservation Initiative Phase II', celebrated the World Turtle Day.

- In order to conserve Turtles and other wildlife, **NMCG has taken up several initiatives** including establishing conservation centres and creating public awareness about the subject.
- The purpose of World Turtle Day, May 23, sponsored yearly since 2000 by American Tortoise Rescue, is to bring attention to, and increase knowledge of and respect for, turtles and tortoises, and encourage human action to help them survive and thrive.

Note:

Given that Biodiversity Conservation of the Ganga river basin is one of the pillars of the Namami Gange programme, the '**International Day of Biological Diversity**', was celebrated with great enthusiasm by NMCG and WII through a Webinar themed '**Our Solutions are in Nature**'.

Hunar Haat

What's in News?

Hunar Haat to restart from September 2020 with the theme of "**Local to Global**".

- "Hunar Haat", which provides market and opportunity to master artisans and craftsmen from remote areas of the country, has become a credible brand of rare exquisite indigenous handmade products.
- It has become "Empowerment Exchange" of artisans and craftsmen from across the country.

Kangra Tea

- Kangra tea is a tea from the **Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh**.
- Both **black tea and green tea** have been produced in the Kangra Valley since the mid-19th century.

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- Kangra tea was given the **Geographical Indication status in 2005**.

- Being **one of India's smallest tea regions** makes the Kangra green and black tea all the more exclusive.

International Tea Day:

- **International Tea Day** is observed annually on **May 21, according to the United Nations**.

- The concerning resolution was adopted on **December 21, 2019** and calls on the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to lead the observance of the Day.

- The International Tea Day aims to raise awareness of the long history and the deep cultural and economic significance of tea around the world.

- The goal of the day is **to promote and foster collective actions to implement activities in favour of the sustainable production and consumption of tea** and raise awareness of its importance in fighting hunger and poverty.

Note:

- The Indian Tea Industry is almost **two centuries old** with more than 1500 established tea gardens employing over 1 million workers. In addition, there are more than 2 lakh Small Tea Growers, who form a sizeable chunk of the Indian Tea Industry.

- **India accounts for 23% of the total tea production of the world** and is the **world's largest producer and consumer of black tea in the world**.

Locust Control Pesticide

Context:

HIL (India) geared to provide locust control pesticide to Iran.

Details:

- HIL, a PSU under the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals and

Fertilizers is in the process of production of 25 MT of Malathion Technical to supply for a locust control programme to Iran under a Government to Government arrangement.

Shahi Litchi and Zardalu Mango

Context:

Bihar Postal Circle (Department of Posts) to deliver "Shahi Lichi" and "Zardalu Mango" at doorsteps of people.

About Shahi Litchi:

- The Shahi Litchi variety grown in Muzaffarpur has high pulp and is juicier compared to the litchi grown in other parts of the country.

- In Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and nearby areas, the conditions are ideal for litchi cultivation, because of humid conditions and alluvial soil.

- Litchi cultivation in India was initially introduced in Bengal after which it spread to other regions including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

- India is the second-largest producer of litchi in the world and Bihar is the leading state for litchi production in the country.

- Shahi Litchi has got a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

About Zardalu/Jardalu Mango:

- Zardalu mango is light yellow in colour and is known for its sweet fragrance.

- They are chiefly grown in Bhagalpur in Bihar.

- They also received the GI tags.

Bharat Stage VI

Context:

Emission norms for L7 (Quadricycle) category for BS VI notified.

Details:

- This notification completes the process of BS-VI for all L, M and N category vehicles in India. The

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emission norms are in line with EU with WMTC (World Motorcycle Test Cycle).

Katkari Tribe

Context:

The Story of Shahapur's Katkari Tribe.

Details:

- A youth from Katkari community, and his team of 10 -12 friends started facilitating various works of the Katkari tribals at revenue offices in his native place.
- The youth and his friends started selling giloy in local markets. The enterprise is now joined by many tribals in the area.
- Through the Van Dhan Yojana, the demand for giloy picked up. Currently, efforts are on to have tie-ups with various retail chains for marketing the product. The scheme also provides working capital to the many SHGs involved in this venture with the tribals.
- Called Gudoochi in Ayurveda, giloy is used in medicines which treat various kinds of fever (viral fever, malaria, etc.) as well as diabetes. It is used in extract form, powder form or cream.

About Katkari Tribe:

- Katkari is one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, as per the classification by Ministry of Home Affairs. They are classified as a Scheduled Tribe.
- They are located primarily in Raigad and in parts of Palghar, Ratnagiri and Thane districts as well and in some places of Gujarat.
- The British administration had classified them under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.
- Katkaris were historically forest dwellers.
- The name Katkari is derived from a forest based activity – the making and barter or sale of Katechu (kath) from the khair tree (Acacia Katechu). It is produced by boiling wood from the Khair tree and evaporating the resulting brew.

- They are bilingual, speaking the Katkari language amongst themselves and Marathi with others. A few of them speak Hindi as well.

Today, most Katkaris have migrated from their forest dwellings to the plains while some hamlets are located on the hills.

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

Context:

Prices of N-95 Masks are being reduced by the Importers/Manufacturers/Suppliers of N-95 Masks after an Advisory issued by NPPA.

Details:

- The Government has notified N-95 Masks as an essential commodity under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- Hoarding and black-marketing of the essential commodity is a punishable offence under the Act.
- To keep a check on the hoarding and black-marketing of the essential commodity, the NPPA, in exercise of the powers conferred under National Disaster Management Act, 2005, had directed all States/UT Governments to ensure sufficient availability of surgical and protective Masks, Hand Sanitizers and Gloves at prices not exceeding the Maximum Retail Price printed on the pack size.

Aarogya Setu

Context:

Aarogya Setu is now open source.

Details:

- The source code of Aarogya Setu has now been made **open source**.
- The source code for the Android version of the application is available for review and collaboration at https://github.com/nic-delhi/AarogyaSetu_Android.git.

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- The iOS version of the application will be released as open source within the next two weeks and the server code will be released subsequently.
- Almost 98% of Aarogya Setu users are on Android platform.
- Opening the source code to the developer community signifies the government's continuing commitment to the principles of transparency and collaboration.
- The process of supporting the open source development will be managed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- All code suggestions will be processed through pull request reviews.
- Aarogya Setu's source code has been licensed under Apache License Version 2.0, and is available on "As-Is" basis. Any reuse of the source code with changes to the code requires the developer to carry a notice of change.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)

Context:

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) aims to enhance fish production to 220 LMT with an investment of over Rs.20,000 crores in the next five years.

Details:

- The Union Fisheries Minister said the scheme will result in doubling export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore and generate about 55 lakhs direct and indirect employment opportunities in the fisheries sector over a period of next five years.
- Under the PMMSY, thrust will be given towards enhancement of fish production and productivity, quality, sustainability, technology infusion, post-harvest infrastructure, modernisation and strengthening of value chain, standards and traceability in fisheries sector from 'catch to consumer', establishing a robust fisheries

management framework, fishers' welfare, enhancement of fisheries export competitiveness.

- The scheme is also expected to create a conducive environment for private sector participation, development of entrepreneurship, business models, promotion of ease of doing business, innovations and innovative project activities including start-ups, incubators, etc. in the fisheries sector.
- The Minister further mentioned that PMMSY, being a fisher-centric umbrella scheme, fishers, fish farmers, fish workers and fish vendors are the key stakeholders in the developmental activities envisaged and enhancement of their socio-economic status is one the core objectives of this scheme.

Chamba Tunnel under Chardham Pariyojana

Context:

Union Transport Minister inaugurates the breakthrough event of Chamba Tunnel under Chardham Pariyojana.

Details:

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) achieved this major milestone by digging up a 440 m long tunnel below the busy Chamba town on Rishikesh-Dharasu road Highway (NH 94).
- The construction of the tunnel was a challenging task in terms of weak soil strata, continuous water seepage, heavy built up area on top, thereby chances of sinking of houses, land acquisition issues, restrictions during COVID lockdown, etc.
- **Benefits of the tunnel:**
 - The Rishikesh-Dharasu-Gangotri road in Uttarakhand has a very significant role from socio-economic and religious points of view.
 - Opening of this tunnel will ease out congestion though the Chamba town and reduce the distance by one kilometre and journey through the town will take only ten minutes as compared to thirty minutes earlier.

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- BRO is a key stakeholder in the prestigious Chardham project and breakthrough of this tunnel has been achieved by Team Shivalik.
- the latest Austrian technology has been used in its construction.
- The tunnel will be through for traffic by October 2020, almost three months before its scheduled date of completion.
- Under the Chardham Project (also spelled Char Dham), BRO is constructing 250 Km of National Highways leading to holy shrines Gangotri and Badrinath.

About the Chardham Project:

- The Char Dham programme is an initiative to improve connectivity to the Char Dham pilgrimage centres in the Himalayas, namely Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.
- These four ancient pilgrimage sites in Uttarakhand are known as Chota Char Dham to differentiate them from the bigger circuit of modern-day Char Dham sites namely Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Rameswaram.
- These projects are being implemented by three executing agencies of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways:
 - Uttarakhand State PWD
 - Border Road Organization (BRO)
 - National Highway & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)
- The project objective is to provide roads with paved shoulders, make provisions for landslide mitigation and other road safety measures, which will provide all weather road connectivity for pilgrims and for movement of defence forces.

Nanostructures

Context:

INST scientists find route to fabricate precisely controlled nanostructures of desired geometry & location on 2D materials.

Details:

- Researchers at the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST – Mohali), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology (DST), have found a straightforward and unique route to fabricate precisely controlled nanostructures of desired geometry and location on 2D materials, through a rapid one-step low power laser writing process.
- Approaches used so far to achieve the controllability over hotspots distribution, which involves the synthesis of complex morphologies, limit their potential to be used for large area substrates.
- In order to overcome this, the INST group developed a hybrid Surface-enhanced Raman spectroscopy (SERS) platform of Molybdenum disulfide (MoS₂) nanostructure decorated with gold nanoparticles, where direct laser writing is used to engineer the artificial edges on the surface of MoS₂. This created localized hotspots with remarkable precision and control.
- Surface-enhanced Raman spectroscopy (SERS) is a technique for molecular detection and characterization that relies on the enhanced Raman scattering of molecules that are adsorbed on SERS-active surfaces, such as nanostructured gold or silver.
- A focused laser beam of meagre power of a conventional Raman spectrometer was used to do nanostructuring on 2D flakes of desired feature size and geometry just by playing with the laser power and exposure time.
- Using this technique, they achieved the minimum feature size of 300nm, which is close to the diffraction limit of the laser used (i.e., 532nm laser line).
- In SERS sensing, producing SERS substrate of controllable hotspots distribution with desired geometry and location is the main challenging task.
- Several efforts have been made by researchers to attain the controllability over hotspots distribution via employing various synthesis

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procedures, hotspots engineering, defect engineering, and so on.

- However, the random distribution of hotspots and precision over geometrical nanostructure has limited the progress in the field of SERS sensing.
- The hybrid SERS platform developed by the INST group offers controlled formation of localized hotspots for ultrasensitive and reproducible detection of analytes.
- Low power-focused laser irradiation technique was employed to create artificial edges on atomically thin 2D MoS₂ sheet, which enables the superior deposition of AuNPs along the artificial edges, and enhances the local electromagnetic field leading to formation of hotspots.

Molecular shock absorbers buffer axonal tension of nerve cells

Context:

Scientists from Raman Research Institute (RRI), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology, along with IISER Pune and Paris Diderot University, have found out that spectrin, which are flexible rod-shaped molecules present in axons, act as 'shock absorbers' to protect axons from stretch-induced damage.

Details:

- The study can help in understanding and treatment of concussion from head injuries as well as stretch-induced nerve injuries.
- **What are Axons?**
 - Axons are long tubular extensions of nerve cells that transmit electrical signals across long distances and can be up to a meter long in the case of humans.
 - At such lengths, they are subjected to large stretch deformations during limb or other bodily movements.
 - Axons in the brain too undergo significant deformations, even during normal activities like

jumping (the human brain is as soft and wobbly as edible jelly).

- Probing into what special strategies axons adopt to protect themselves from damage during such stretch deformations, the scientists zeroed in on the molecule spectrin, a cytoskeletal protein.
- The research team showed that neuronal cells may have evolved a clever strategy using an etched optical fiber attached to a piezo drive as a force-sensing cantilever to stretch live axons and to measure the resultant tension.
- Piezo drives attached to optical fiber is used to stretch on axons where optical fiber acts as a force-sensing cantilever.
- The resulting tension measured along the axon comes from the axonal cytoskeleton (consisting of biopolymers), of which spectrin is a part.
- Earlier single-molecule experiments had shown that spectrin molecules contain several folded regions which can unfold when the protein is stretched and refold when released, thus acting as molecular bellows.
- By comparing detailed tension measurements on axons with a mathematical model that describes such a mechanism, the RRI team showed that this process helps axons to buffer tension and dissipate excess elastic energy.
- Unlike a linear spring, where the tension increases proportionally with stretch, axonal tension exhibits a plateau-like region where tension is only weakly dependent on stretch, due to the unfolding process.
- This suggests that spectrins can act as axonal 'shock absorbers' to protect axons from stretch-induced damage.
- **Significance of the study:**
 - The brain undergoes significant shear deformations (up to 5% of strain) even under normal activities such as jumping.
 - In contact sports, brain concussion occurs and is a leading cause of injuries.

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- This study will have significant implications to our understanding of concussion that result from head impacts as well as stretch-induced nerve injuries.

Tejas Mk-1 FOC

Context:

Tejas Mk-1 FOC handed over to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Details:

- The IAF inducted Tejas Mk-1 FOC aircraft into the recently resurrected No 18 Squadron, the "Flying Bullets" at Air Force Station Sulur in Tamil Nadu.
- The Squadron is the first in the IAF to induct this platform.

About Tejas Mk-1:

- Tejas Mk-1 FOC is a single engine, light weight, highly agile, all-weather multi-role fighter aircraft capable of air-to-air refuelling thus, making it a truly versatile platform.
- The aircraft has been inducted in the FOC standard (Final Operational Clearance).
- The FOC variant has close combat gun, additional drop tanks, Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile capability, updated avionics and flight control software suite.
- The LCA (Tejas) Mk-2, a bigger variant aircraft with bigger engine, was under design stage and test trials of the aircraft are expected to happen by 2022.

About the Number 18 Squadron:

- The No 18 Squadron was raised at Ambala in 1965 with the Folland Gnat Aircraft.
- The Squadron has the unique distinction of having operated two HAL made aircraft, the Tejas and the Ajeet, which it also operated from the same station.

- Over the years, it also operated MiG-27 ML aircraft from various bases across the country.
- The Squadron saw active combat during the 1971 war.
- The Squadron was number plated in Apr 2016.
- The Squadron falls under the operational control of the Southern Air Command which is responsible for integrating the Squadron into the IAF Concept of Operations.
- The Squadron was resurrected in April 2020.

New Development Bank

Context:

The Union Finance Minister attended the Special Board of Governors meeting of the New Development Bank (NDB) through video-conference.

About the NDB:

- The NDB is a multilateral developmental institution created by BRICS.

Delimitation Commission

Context:

Delimitation Commission holds meeting.

Details:

- The Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission of India is a commission established by the Government of India under the provisions of the Delimitation Commission Act.
- Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country to represent changes in population.
- The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.

Why is Delimitation done?

- To give equal representation to equal segments of a population.

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- To incorporate the principle, 'One Vote One Value'.
- To have a fair division of geographical areas so that no political party has an undue advantage over others in an election.

Locust Control Operations

Context:

Union Agriculture Minister reviews Locust Control Operations at a high-level meeting.

Details:

- The Centre is in close touch with the affected States and an Advisory has been issued.
- 15 sprayers will start arriving from Britain in the next 15 days.
- Besides, 45 more sprayers will be procured in a month or one-and-a-half months.
- Drones will be used to spray pesticides on tall trees and inaccessible places for effective control of locusts, while plans are afoot to deploy helicopters for aerial spray.
- 11 Regional Control Rooms have been established and special contingents have been deployed along with additional manpower to check the spread of locusts.
- Currently, 21 micronair and 26 Ulvamast (47 spray equipment) in Locust Control Offices (LCOs) are being used for locust control and 200 officials are deployed.
- Beyond scheduled desert areas, temporary control camps have also been set up at Jaipur, Chittorgarh, Dausa in Rajasthan; Sheopur, Neemuch, Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh for locust control.
- Locust has been controlled in an area of about 50,468 hectares in 334 locations in Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
- Locust control operations have been undertaken every day in the morning hours with the help of control spray vehicles, tractor mounted sprayers and fire brigade vehicles under the supervision of

concerned district authorities and officials of the State Agriculture Department.

National Commission for Women

Context:

Senior member of the National Commission for Women meets Union Minister.

Financial Stability and Development Council

Context:

Finance Minister chairs 22nd meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC).

Details:

- The meeting reviewed the current global and domestic macro-economic situation, financial stability and vulnerabilities issues, major issues likely to be faced by banks and other financial institutions as also regulatory and policy responses, Liquidity/Solvency of NBFCs/HFCs/MFIs and other related issues.
- Besides, market volatility, domestic resource mobilisation and capital flows issues were also discussed by the Council.

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB)

Context:

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme to be taken forward using innovative ways in view of the prevailing conditions of COVID-19.

Details:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to:
- Move towards digital mediums for the carrying on the activities under EBSB by each participating Ministry/Department.
- Organise webinars on Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat themes for their wide dissemination.

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- Have a common repository for the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat digital resources that can be used by every Ministry. This repository may be hosted on a common portal.
- iA revised communication plan needs to be made and Doordarshan's 30 minute weekly programme on EBSB should be destination based with inputs from all ministries.

Instant PAN

Context:

FM launches facility of Instant PAN through Aadhaar based e-KYC.

Details:

- This facility is now available for those PAN applicants who possess a valid Aadhaar number and have a mobile number registered with Aadhaar.
- The allotment process is paperless and an electronic PAN (e-PAN) is issued to the applicants free of cost.
- The process of applying for instant PAN is very simple.
- The instant PAN applicant is required to access the e-filing website of the Income Tax Department to provide her/his valid Aadhaar number and then submit the OTP received on her/his Aadhaar registered mobile number.
- On successful completion of this process, a 15-digit acknowledgment number is generated.
- If required, the applicant can check the status of the request anytime by providing her/his valid Aadhaar number and on successful allotment, can download the e-PAN.
- The e-PAN is also sent to the applicant on her/his email id, if it is registered with Aadhaar.

Finance Commission holds meeting with Ministry of Power on Power Sector Reforms

What's in News?

- The Finance Commission held a detailed meeting with the Power Ministry on issues relating to the Reforms of the Electricity Sector in the States.
- This was in continuation to the recommendations made on the power sector by the Finance Commission in its report for the financial year 2020-2021.

Details:

- The current disconnect in the structures of the power system between decision making by the State Government and the financial consequences thereof, which are borne by the DISCOMs, lead to losses.
- The Power Minister emphasized the need for the State Governments to be also conjointly responsible for the financial health of their fully owned DISCOMs.
- It was suggested that towards this end, the borrowing limits of the State Governments under the FRBM Act, needed to be recalibrated to take these liabilities into account.
- This would bring to fore the responsibility of the State Governments under whose control the DISCOMs operate.
- It would also bring financial transparency and bring about financially and managerially responsible behavior of the States with respect to DISCOMs.

Reforms in the pipeline for the turnaround of the DISCOMs:

- A new tariff policy which is under consideration for approval. It includes path breaking reforms in the power sector.
- Amendments are proposed to the Electricity Act of 2003.
- Old schemes of the Ministry are being amalgamated into a new scheme for which the Finance Commission's support of Rs. 3 lakh crores over a five year period would be required.

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- This scheme would primarily focus on steps for reduction of losses, separate feeders for agriculture and smart prepaid meters.

Conclusion:

- 15th Finance Commission in its report for FY 2020-21 noted that most States have reduced, to some extent, their aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses and the difference between average cost of supply and average realizable revenue (ACS-ARR) after implementation of the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) in 2016-17.
- However, the progress would not be sustainable unless systemic issues in the power sector are suitably addressed.
- Robust and systemic reforms are required to improve the health of the power sector.

Note:

Recently, the finance Minister announced Rs. 90,000 crores Liquidity Injection for Electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOMs), as one of the 15 measures in the first of the five tranches to combat the economic disruption from the coronavirus lockdown, which had stretched the finances of the Power DISCOMs.

Locust Control Operations

What's in News?

Locust control operations conducted today at 15 locations in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Index of Eight Core Industries

What's in News?

The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has released the Index of Eight Core Industries for the Month of April, 2020.

Details:

- The growth rate of Index of Eight Core Industries for April 2020 **declined by 38.1%** (provisional)

compared to decline of 9% (provisional) during the month of March 2020.

- In view of nationwide lockdown during April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic, various industries viz. Coal, Cement, Steel, Natural Gas, Refinery, Crude Oil etc experienced substantial loss of production.

Index of Industrial Production:

- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Mission Sagar

What's in News?

As part of Mission Sagar, Indian Naval Ship Kesari entered Port Antsiranana, Madagascar on 27th May 2020.

Details:

- The Government of India is providing assistance to friendly foreign countries in dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Towards one such effort, INS Kesari carried a consignment of COVID related essential medicines for the people of Madagascar.
- The deployment also resonates with the vision of our Prime Minister of Security and Growth for All in the Region 'SAGAR' and highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with the countries of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Missile Park 'Agneeprastha' to be set up at INS Kalinga

What's in News?

Foundation Stone for a Missile Park "AGNEEPRASTHA" has been laid at INS Kalinga.

Details:

- The Missile Park 'Agneeprastha' once completed will be dedicated to all the Officers, Sailors and Support Staff of INS Kalinga, who have served in

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this premier op-support Base of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) since its establishment in 1981.

- The Park also commemorates the award of the prestigious Unit Citation to INS Kalinga for the year 2018-19.
- 'Agneeprastha' aims to capture glimpses of Missile History of INS Kalinga since 1981 till date.
- The Missile Park has been set up with a replica of missiles and Ground Support Equipment (GSE) that showcase the evolution of missiles handled by the unit.
- The main attraction is P-70 'Ametist', an underwater launched anti-ship missile from the arsenal of the old 'Chakra' (Charlie-1 submarine) which was in service with IN during 1988-91.
- 'AGNEEPRASTHA' will also provide a one-stop arena for motivation and stimulation of inquisitive minds regarding the missiles and related technologies.

2 MW Solar Power Plant inaugurated at INS Kalinga

What's in News?

In keeping with the initiative of Government of India to promote Solar Power and objective to achieve 100 GW of solar power by 2022 as part of the National Solar Mission, a 2 MW Solar Photovoltaic Plant was commissioned at INS Kalinga, Visakhapatnam.

- The plant, which is the largest in the Eastern Naval Command has an estimated life of 25 years.
- INS Kalinga has taken significant strides in Green Initiatives since it's setting up in the early 1980s, including afforestation, numerous plantation drives, coastal cleanup drives and protection of the Geo-Heritage site "Erra Matti Dibbalu".

Inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest produce items in Minimum Support Price List

What's in News?

Ministry of Tribal Affairs has announced Inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items and stipulation of their Minimum Support Price (MSP) under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme titled "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain of MFP".

Details:

- This decision enhances the coverage from 50 to 73 items.
- The announcement comes in view of the exceptional circumstances currently prevailing in the country on account of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the potential of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs scheme to offer the much needed support to the tribal MFP gatherers.
- The Ministry has provided flexibility to States to fix MSP upto 10% higher or lower than MSP declared by the Government.
- This notification is aimed to address several issues of exploitation by local traders, ensuring fair returns on their produce.

Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain of MFP:

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- The Central Government had introduced a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for a select list of MFP through "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce through Minimum Support price and development of Value Chain of MFP" Scheme in 2011 to provide a social safety net to these underprivileged forest dwellers, and to aid in their empowerment.
- TRIFED, as the apex national organisation involved in the improvement of the livelihood and empowerment of these tribal people, is the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme.

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- The Scheme has been a resounding success in offering basic support to the tribal gatherers and has helped in improving their lives.

- Vandhan Kendras have been set up as Tribal start-ups onboarding over 3.6 Lakhs beneficiaries.

Researchers culture novel Coronavirus

What's in News?

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) has established stable cultures of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) from patients' samples.

Details:

- Virologists at CCMB have isolated infectious viruses from several isolates.
- The ability to culture the virus in lab enables CCMB to work towards vaccine development and testing of potential drugs to fight COVID-19.

Novel coronavirus:

- Novel Coronavirus enters human cell by binding with the ACE-2 receptor on the cell surface.
- Not all cells have ACE-2 receptors.
- Human epithelial cells in the respiratory tract copiously express ACE-2 receptors, causing respiratory disease in the infected patient.
- However, human epithelial cells cannot be grown in lab.
- Currently, primary epithelial cells generated from human origins do not grow for many generations in labs, which is key to culturing viruses continuously. At the same time, the labs that are growing the virus need an 'immortal' cell line.
- They use Vero cells (kidney epithelial cell lines from green African monkey), which express ACE-2 proteins and carry a cell division that allows them to proliferate indefinitely.
- Using the Vero cell lines to grow the Coronavirus, CCMB is now in a position to isolate and maintain viral strains from different regions.

Why cultivate a dreadful germ?

- If large amount of the virus are cultivated and are inactivated, they can be used as inactivated virus vaccine.
- Once the inactivated virus is injected, the human immune system triggers the production of germ-specific antibodies.
- One can inactivate the virus by heat or chemical means.
- The inactivated virus can trigger antibody response, but does not infect and make the person sick as the virus cannot reproduce.
- For the development of antibodies or antidotes, virus cultures are important. Inactivated viruses can trigger antibody response in other mammalian hosts in addition to humans.
- Various such hosts are currently under test for their efficiency of antibody response.
- Such antibodies generated in these non-human hosts can be purified, processed and collected.
- The antibodies can be used as therapeutic intervention for patients suffering from the infection.
- Such antibodies can trigger antiviral response upon injection into humans and have the potential of limiting the infection.
- Administering antibodies does not provide immunity like a vaccine does, but can be considered as anti-dotes against the virus.
- These cultures may also be helpful in the process of drug screening. Potential drugs can be tested against the virus in a test-tube for their efficacy.

Jal Jeevan Mission in Chhattisgarh

What's in News?

- Chhattisgarh State presented their Annual Action Plan for 2020-21 for consideration and approval of Ministry of Jal Shakti.

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- Subsequently, the Government of India has approved Rs 445 Crore for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in Chhattisgarh.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission launched under the Ministry of Jal Shakti is aimed to provide adequate potable drinking water of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis to every rural household of the country by the 2024.
- A budget of whopping Rs 3.60 lakh Crore has been allocated for this scheme.

PM greets people of Goa on their Statehood Day

What's in News?

The Prime Minister of India greeted the people of Goa on the occasion of their Statehood Day.

Details:

- Goa, which was liberated from the Portuguese on December 19, 1961, was until 1987 a union territory.
- Following persistent demands; including a 1976 resolution by the Goa assembly demanding full statehood; Goa finally became a state on 30 May 1987.
- Goa became the 25th State of the Indian Union.

Operation Samudra Setu

What's in News?

Indian Navy commences next phase of Operation "Samudra Setu" to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas.

National AI Portal of India

What's in News?

Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Law and Justice and Communications has launched the National AI Portal of India.

- India's national Artificial Intelligence Portal has been jointly developed by the Ministry of Electronics and IT and the IT Industry.

- National e-Governance Division of the Ministry of Electronics and IT and NASSCOM from the IT industry will jointly run this portal. This portal shall work as a one stop digital platform for AI related developments in India, sharing of resources such as articles, start-ups, investment funds in AI, resources, companies and educational institutions related to AI in India.

- The portal will also share documents, case studies, research reports, etc. It has sections about learning and new job roles related to AI.

"Responsible AI for Youth"

- The IT Minister also launched a National Program for the youth, "Responsible AI for Youth".

- The aim of this Program is to give the young students of our country a platform and empower them with appropriate new age tech mind-set, relevant AI skill-sets and access to required AI tool-sets to make them digitally ready for the future.

- The Program has been created and launched by the National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics & IT in collaboration with Intel India, with support from the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Human Resource Development.

- DoSE&L will help reach out to State Education Departments to nominate teachers as per eligibility criteria.

- "Responsible AI for Youth" will empower the youth to become AI ready and help reduce the skill gap, while enabling youth to create meaningful social impact solutions.

- The Program is designed to reach out to students from Government schools pan India and provide them with an opportunity to become part of the skilled workforce in an inclusive manner.

Jal Jeevan Mission

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What's in News?

Annual action plan has been approved for Bihar under Jal Jeevan Mission.

Details:

- Bihar State presented its Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) Annual Action Plan before the Ministry of Jal Shakti for consideration and approval, wherein it is planned to have 100% coverage of all households with functional tap water connections by 2020-21.
- Bihar state government has set an ambitious goal of providing all the remaining households with tap connection. It's a huge target, but the State Government is all set with the roadmap to achieve the target.
- A proper plan is in place for 100% coverage of all 38 districts during 2020-21.
- Bihar Government is also giving special attention to providing 100% of Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) in Aspirational districts, quality-affected habitations and SC/ST villages.
- Because of abundance of ground water and surface water in Bihar, the State is making all efforts in this regard.

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) has been launched in partnership with States, to enable every household in villages to have an FHTC within the premises by 2024.
- It has been envisaged that each household will have potable water supply of prescribed quality on a regular and long-term basis.
- It is the endeavour of the Government to bring improvement in the lives of rural people by making provision of assured services at their doorsteps.
- JJM is to play a significant role in bringing 'ease of living' for the rural community, especially women. Women must lead JJM in their villages to meet their needs and aspirations.

e-booklet on DARPG achievements

What's in News?

Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has launched the e-booklet on Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances' (DARPG) achievements for the period May 30, 2019 to May 30, 2020.

Details:

- DARPG had provided immense impetus to e-Governance in India by:
- Intense pursuit of implementation of e-Office in the Central Secretariat and States and
- The conduct of the 22nd and 23rd National e-Governance Conferences at Shillong and Mumbai in 2019 and 2020 respectively.
- DARPG has undertaken significant reforms in handling Public Grievances by pursuing CPGRAMS reforms in several Ministries and Departments.
- DARPG has brought out 3 important publications – the Good Governance Index (GGI) 2019, the National e-Services Delivery Assessment 2019 and the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure 2019.
- These publications, rich in their academic content, provided immense inputs for taking good governance forward; for example, enabling the march towards a digital central secretariat.

DARPG has a massive responsibility in meeting new challenges of providing timely grievance redressal by improving its tool kit with feed-back call centres, upgraded software solutions and taking forward the Government's good governance agenda with focus on e-Governance and e-Services.

Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)

- The primary role of this department is to plan and implement citizen-centric measures in the domain of public grievances and carry out administrative reforms so that the Government is

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in a position to deliver quality public services without any obstacles.

- The grievances received will be forwarded to the respective ministries, departments and state governments. The cases will be followed till it is closed.

COVID-19 Bio Banks

What's in News?

- NITI Aayog has recently issued guidelines for the sharing of bio specimens and data for research related to COVID-19.
- As per the directives of the Cabinet Secretary, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has notified 16 bio-repositories for collecting, storing and maintaining clinical samples (oropharyngeal/ nasopharyngeal swabs, bronchoalveolar lavage, sputum, blood, urine and stool) of COVID-19 patients.

Details:

- The samples will be collected and archived for future use to develop validated diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, etc.
- These designated facilities will develop uniform Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for sample collection, transportation, aliquoting, storage, and sharing.
- The role of bio-banks for COVID-19 samples would be the development of a vaccine and treatments; guidance regarding handling, including nasopharyngeal swabs; and conditions under which the higher Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) practices should be followed, for example, when working with cultures of the coronavirus specimens.
- The Department of Biotechnology would be supporting these COVID-19 designated Bio-bank facilities through a well strategized future plan so that novel technological interventions can be developed in due course of time.

- These designated bio repositories will use the clinical samples for R&D purpose in their respective institutes.

- In addition, they are also authorized to share the samples with academia, industry and commercial entities involved in the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, etc., after scrutinising the purpose of the request and ensuring benefit to the country.

- Sharing of Bio-specimens both Clinical and Viral is going to be key for new technology and product development by Indian researchers, start-ups and industries.

Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC)

Context:

ANC gets a new Commander-in-Chief.

About the Andaman & Nicobar Command:

- There are about 19 military commands in the country and only two of them are tri-service commands – Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Strategic Forces Command.
- Based in Port Blair, the ANC was created in 2001 to safeguard India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia and the Strait of Malacca by increasing rapid deployment of military assets in the region.
- It provides logistical and administrative support to naval ships which are sent on deployment to East Asia and the Pacific Ocean.
- Its components include the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Coast Guard.
- It is headed by an officer called the Commander-in-Chief of the ANC.
- It patrols India's Exclusive Economic Zone to suppress gun running, narcotics smuggling, piracy, and poaching, and conducts maritime surveillance, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).

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The other tri-service command, the Strategic Forces Command, was set up in 2003 to handle the country's nuclear arsenal.

Ministry of Minority Affairs

Context:

The Ministry of Minority Affairs releases Infographics highlighting the initiatives and achievements of the last six years.

Details:

The five Infographics are based on:

1. Skill Development, Employment & Employment opportunities
2. Hunar Haat: Read more about Hunar Haat covered in 9th February 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis. Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) Educational Empowerment
3. Utilisation of Waqf properties: Geo tagging and Digitisation of Waqf properties across the country ensuring utilization of Waqf properties for welfare of the society. Know more about the Central Waqf Council on PIB dated 19 March, 2020.

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