



MADE EASY

India's Best Institute for IES, GATE & PSUs

**MADE EASY
WEEKLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WEEK-4

22nd December - 31st December

**Targeted Examinations:
CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Exams,
SSC and Banking Exams**

22nd DECEMBER 2020

E20 fuel

- The Government of India recently launched E20 fuel to encourage renewable fuel, such as ethanol.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways recently released a draught notice requesting input from the public on the implementation of E20 petrol.

Key Points:

- This is being achieved as the Government of India is seeking to bring the ethanol industry to 2 lakh crores of rupees in the next 5 years. At present, India's ethanol industry is at twenty-two thousand crores of rupees.
- E20 means that 20% of ethanol is mixed with petrol. At present, the allowable degree of blending is 10% of ethanol in India.

Benefits of E20:

- It lowers automotive pollution.
- Which reduces the oil import bill and also saves foreign exchange to improve the country's energy stability.
- Reduces emissions of hydrocarbons and carbon dioxide.

NOTE:

Ethanol is a biofuel. It is a common byproduct of biomass left by agricultural feedstock.

Human Freedom Index, 2020

- The Human Freedom Index has been issued by the Cato Institute and the Fraser Institute. It will use data from 2008 to 2018.
- According to the Index, personal freedom has declined globally since 2008. India ranked 111 in the Human Rights Index for 2020. India ranked 94th in 2019.

Key Highlights:

- It effectively ranks countries based on fiscal, civil and personal rights. In the Human Freedom Index, India is ahead of China and Bangladesh. China and Bangladesh were ranked 129 and 139, respectively.
- New Zealand, Switzerland, and Hong Kong packed the first three spots. However, Hong Kong's rank is projected to decrease in the future due to China's hostile involvement in the region.
- The scores of India in the Human Freedom Index were as follows:
 - India scored 6.30 out of 10 in Personal freedom.
 - India scored 6.56 out of 10 in Economic Freedom.
 - India scored 6.43 out of 10 in Human Freedom.
- Syria ranked the last in the index due to war scenarios in the country

About Human Freedom Index:

- The Index is based on 79 distinct indices of personal and economic independence. It includes the size of the Government, the rule of law, protection and security, civil liberty, the size of the Government, property rights, expression, religion, freedom of foreign trade, etc.
- The Index of Democracy in the World was the precursor of the Individual Freedom Index.

ASTRA Mk-I Missile, IMSAS and BOSS System

- The Defence Ministry handed over three systems developed by DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organization) to the chiefs of the Defence Forces.
- The IMSAS (Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System) was handed over to the Indian Naval Chief Admiral Karambir Singh. The Astra Mk-1 was handed over to the Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria. BOSS, Border Surveillance System was handed over to the Army Chief General MM Naravane.

About IMSAS:

- IMSAS is an indigenous, high-performance, intelligent software device that provides the Indian Navy with a global maritime situational image and analytical capability.
- The device offers marine operating images of ships at sea from the Naval Headquarters. It was developed by the Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR).

About BOSS:

- It's an all-weather electronic surveillance system. The Research and Development Instruments Establishment, which operates under DRDO, has been established.
- The device is being tested in the Ladakh border region. It controls the Line of Actual Control by automatically detecting intrusions in extreme high-altitude sub-zero temperature zones with remote operating capabilities.

ASTRA Mk-1:

- The ASTRA weapon system was developed by the Defense Research and Development Laboratory. It is an indigenously produced first missile beyond range that can be launched from Light Combat Aircraft, Sukhoi-30, Mig-29 and Mig-29K.

North African Couscous

- The Couscous, the Berber dish, has recently been added to the Intangible Cultural Heritage List. Despite their differences, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania have joined together to highlight their passion for the dish.
- The Couscous has introduced the Hawker community of Singapore, the Baudima dance of Zambia and the Spanish wine horse to the UNESCO list of Intangible Heritage.

About Couscous:

- It is a refined grain food made from small bales of durum wheat or semolina flour. It's a Berber dish. It is a staple food from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Libya.
- The UN Cultural Heritage List contains customs and rituals related to the preparation of Couscous.

■ NOTE:

The Berbers are ethnic group living in West Africa and North Africa.

Five Hundred Meter Aperture Spherical Telescope

- After the failure of the Arecibo Telescope, China is opening the world's biggest radio telescope for foreign scientists.
- The world's second-largest Arecibo Observatory collapsed in Puerto Rico after the 900-ton receiver base was lost and 140-metre plummeted into the radio dish below.

Key Points:

- In 2016, the building of Quick was finished. It's situated in the depression of Dawodang. Dawodang depression is a natural reservoir in Guizhou, southwest China.
- It is the largest full-opening radio telescope and the second largest single-plate opening. The RATA-600 in Russia is the world's largest single-disk aperture telescope.
- The telescope has a reflecting surface of 500-metres in diameter. However, only a circle of 300 metres diameter can be used at one time.
- It is located in a natural sinkhole. A sinkhole is formed due to erosion.

23rd DECEMBER 2020

National Digital Health Mission

- The Government of India has recently approved the National Digital Health Mission's Health Data Management Policy.
- It lays out a basic requirement for the security of data privacy to be implemented in order to ensure consistency with relevant laws and regulations. The strategy is to serve as a guide paper for the National Digital Health Environment.

About National Digital Health Mission

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has declared the creation of the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) on Independence Day 2020.
- The mission aims to build a national digital health environment that facilitates universal health coverage, partnering with other government initiatives, including the Aadhaar Identity Service and Ayushman Bharat Yojana.

Key Features:

- The mission is implemented by the National Health Authority under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The mission aims to achieve the following:
 - To establish Digital Health Systems. These systems will manage infrastructure requirements and core digital health data.
 - To create registries. The registries will hold all credible data of healthcare professionals, clinical establishments, healthcare professionals, drugs and pharmacies.
 - To establish standardized personal health records
 - To achieve health related Sustainable Development Goals
 - To make health care services portable nationally

UK's new strain of coronavirus

- India and several other countries have suspended their flights from the United Kingdom due to the

concerns about the new variant of COVID-19 that is spreading rapidly in the country.

- A mutant of COVID-19 has been the reason for the rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in East and South England. The new variety is being referred to as Variant Under Investigation (VUI).

Key Points:

- The variant was identified by COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK). The COG-UK is a consortium that analyses genome sequencing data. It is the largest contributor to COVID-19 database GISAID.
- The new variant is the result of multiple mutations in the spike protein of COVID-19. According to the preliminary analysis, the mutant is more transmissible than the previously circulating variant. The COG-UK had identified these mutations as "N501Y". It is an area of spike protein where the virus binds to the human cell.

Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

- The Union Ministry of Power drafted the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020. These rules are being drafted for the first time in the Indian history.

Key Highlights:

- The average number and duration of usages per consumer per year for the DISCOMs are to be fixed by the State Electricity Regulatory Commission.
- The procedure to get a new connection has been simplified greatly under the new rules. Only two documents are required to set up a connection of 10 KW of load. The need to estimate the demand charges for loads up to 150 KW has been removed.
- A rebate of 2% to 5% has been fixed on serving bills with delay of sixty days or more.
- The consumers can pay the bills in cash only if their bill amount is less than Rs 1000. Bills greater than Rs 1000 are to be paid online.

- A new category of Prosumers has been identified under the new rule. Prosumers are those consumers who have the right to produce electricity for self-use and inject excess to the grid.
- A Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum is to be established. The forum will have representatives of consumers at various levels. It includes sub-division for ease of consumer grievance redressal.

Stopgap Funding Bill

- The US President Donald Trump recently signed the Stopgap Funding Bill. The bill provides the lawmakers two more days to sort out a few issues in the ongoing negotiations about the 900 billion USD aid package.

Key Highlights:

- A stopgap funding bill is used by the US Government to ensure that it does not run out of funds for running federal programmes after the deadline of an Appropriation Act.
- In a fiscal year, the US Congress passes 12 Appropriation Acts which gives budgetary authority to spend from the US Treasury for specific purposes.
- These Acts have a deadline and the funds cannot be used to address new obligations after it. When the Congress fails to fund the government, a government shutdown is declared and all non-essential services are stopped.

About Government Shutdown:

- The Government Shutdown occurs when the Congress fails to fund the government. In such a scenario, the US Government stops all the non-essential services. On the other hand, the essential services such as police departments, armed forces, etc continue to function.

24th DECEMBER 2020

RBI Positive Pay System

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is to introduce "Positive Pay System" from January 1, 2021 for cheque transactions above Rs 50,000. This is to be done to enhance safety and eliminate frauds.

Key Points:

- It is a method of reconfirming the core information of large-value tests. Significant worth checks are those of purchases in excess of INR 50,000.
- It simply means reconfirming the main specifics of the checks. It is not necessary for banks to enforce the system.
- The check issuer shall electronically upload some specifics of the check to the bank via SMS, ATM, mobile app, etc.
- Only the cheques that are compliant with the new system are accepted under the Dispute Redressal mechanism.
- The Cheque Truncation System is currently available all over India. It presently covers 2% of the retail payment in terms of volume and 15% of the retail payment in terms of value.
- The Positive Pay System augments customer safety and reduces frauds occurring on account tampering of cheque leaves.

Krishna Godavari Basin's R- Cluster

- The Reliance Industries Limited and British Petroleum recently announced the start of gas production from the R cluster. R Cluster is the deepest Off-shore gas field in Asia.

Key Points:

- It is the first of the three deepwater gas projects jointly developed by Reliance Industries Limited and British Petroleum.

- The R cluster is an off-shore gas field which is a part of the KG-D6 block of the Krishna Godavari Basin.
- The other 2 deep-water gas projects in the block are Satellite Cluster and the MJ gas field.

About R Cluster

- The British Petroleum and Reliance India Limited are to jointly invest Rs 40,000 crores on the three fields. The production was to start by May 2020 but was delayed due to COVID-19. The satellite cluster is to start production in 2021-22.
- It is located 60 kilometres from the existing KG D6 Control and Riser Platform off the Kakinada coast.

Status of Leopard in India 2018 Report

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change recently released the "Status of Leopard in India, 2018" report.

Key Findings:

- India has 12,852 leopards compared to 7,910 leopards in 2014. In the country, the leopard population has increased by 60%.
- The states that registered the highest estimates of leopards were Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- Approximately 3,387 leopards have been found in the Western Ghats. About 3,387 leopards have been found in the Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Kerala regions.
- The Leopard census was also a part of India's tiger survey. According to the Tiger Survey, India is home to 12,852 leopards in the tiger ranges.

Conservation Status of Leopards:

- Leopards are listed as "Vulnerable" in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Under CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) they are listed under Appendix I.
- They are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Companies (Auditor's Report) Order, 2020 (CARO)

- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has announced the notification of Companies (Auditor's Report) Order, 2020 (CARO).

Key Features:

- Disclosure of knowledge of the litigation against the Benami holding firm.
- The auditor should provide information on the expenditure made by the firm.
- Fraud perpetrated by the company or by the company should be reported.
- Cash losses for the current year and the previous financial year should be published.
- The summary should include details of the loan repayment term and the amount to be repaid.

Significance:

- The CARO 2020 enhances the information available to both investors and financial institutions. It is a major step for transparency in accounts.

25th DECEMBER 2020

SEHAT Scheme for Jammu and Kashmir

- The Prime Minister of India launched the SEHAT Scheme for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. SEHAT is Social Endeavour for Health and Telemedicine.

Key Features:

- The scheme would provide free cashless care for the inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir up to Rs 5 lakhs of health coverage.
- A card must be given to the recipients of the programme.
- The Common Service Centers shall be used efficiently in the execution of the system.

- The scheme will cover all cases of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in the Indoor Patient Department.
- The scheme will also use the help of Arogya Mitras to cover a maximum number of people.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation is to provide the medical supplies for the hospitals under the scheme.

About Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana:

- The scheme was rolled out in Jammu and Kashmir in 2018, that is, even before the Abrogation of Article 370.
- West Bengal, Odisha and Telangana are the states that did not implement Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana or Ayushman Bharat. Earlier Delhi also did not implement the scheme.

Mucormycosis and COVID-19

- The Gujarat Government issued an advisory on Fungal infection called "Mucormycosis". It is a serious infection with a mortality rate of 50%. It compromises the immune system.

Key Points:

- It is a rare fungal infection with continuous headache and heaviness in the facial area. It is now widely reported in COVID-19 recovered patients.
- It commonly affects lungs after inhaling the fungal spores from air. The fungus can also enter the human body through a cut, burn or other types of skin injury. These fungal spores can occur in any part of the body.
- Mucormycosis is now becoming common among COVID-19 recovered patients. This shows how the COVID-19 recovered patients are prone to immunity related issues. According to a UK study, COVID-19 recovered patients lose 90% immunity in two-three months.

Kilauea Volcano

- The Kilauea Volcano in Hawaii's Big Island recently erupted after an Earthquake that struck the region

About Kilauea Volcano:

- The Kilauea volcano was last active in 2018 due to an earthquake.
- Mt Kilauea is the second youngest volcano of the Hawaiian hotspot.
- It is the most active of the five volcanoes that form the Island of Hawaii.
- Structurally, Mt Kilauea has recently formed Caldera. Caldera is a hollow structure formed after a volcano erupts large volumes of magma in a short period of time. The ground surface then collapses downward into the emptied magma chamber. The collapse leaves a massive depression at the surface. This is called Caldera.

About Hawaii Hotspot:

- It is a volcanic hotspot that is located near the Hawaii Islands. The Hotspots are volcanic regions that are fed by the underlying mantle that is hotter than the surrounding mantle.
- The Island of Hawaii is made of five separate volcanoes such as Kohala (Extinct), Mauana Kea (Dormant), Hualalai (dormant), Mauna Loa (active) and Kilauea (active). The Island of Hawaii is currently growing due to volcanoes Mauna Loa and Kilauea.

Green National Highways Corridor Project

- The Government of India has recently entered into a USD 500 million loan arrangement with the World Bank to build the country's Green National Highway Corridors.
- These corridors will be built in Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The scheme will support the building of 783 kilometres of highways by the Ministry of Road and Highways.

Key Points:

- The project would provide road users with reliable transport.
- It will connect people to markets and services.

- The project would encourage the effective use of water and building materials to reduce the loss of natural resources. This will help to reduce GreenHouse gas pollution.
- It will strengthen and widen structures by constructing new pavements, bypasses, drainage facilities and improved junctions.
- The project will introduce road safety measures.

Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM)

- The Medium Range Surface to Air Missile, MRSAM tested from a defence facility in Odisha.
- It was jointly developed by the Defence Research development Organisation and the Israel Aerospace Industries.

About MRSAM

- MRSAM is a one command control system that tracks missiles, radar and mobile launcher systems.
- It is capable of transporting and launching eight canisterised missiles in two stacks. The weapon weighs 276 kilograms and is 4.5 metres long.
- It is equipped with advanced active radar Radio Frequency seeker, bidirectional data link and phased array radar.
- The MRSAM is powered by the dual-pulse solid propulsion system developed by DRDO. It is coupled with a vector control system that allows the missile to move at Mach 2 speed. It can engage multiple targets simultaneously at ranges of seventy kilometres.

26th DECEMBER 2020

100% FDI in DTH

- The Union Cabinet recently approved updated standards for direct-to-home (DTH) broadcasting facilities.
- The criteria call for 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in DTH. The licence duration has now been extended to 20 years. It's been ten years earlier.

What are the new Guidelines?

- The licencing fee was revised to 8 percent from 10 percent of the adjusted gross sales.
- Broadcasting companies would have to pay the licencing fee on a quarterly basis. Companies are also charged on an annual basis.
- The guidelines also encourage DTH service providers to spend more coverage leading to improved operations and increased growth.

■ NOTE:

It is Direct To Home Service. It is a digital satellite service that provides television viewing services through satellite transmissions.

JSA II: Catch the Rain Awareness Generation Campaign

- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan II:** Catch the Rain Awareness Generation Drive has recently been launched in New Delhi.
- The National Water Mission initiated the programme. It was released under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Youth and Recreation, and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan.

About the Campaign

- The Campaign focuses on water management and the recycling of rainwater.
- Stakeholders will be alerted to the construction of rainwater harvesting systems according to climatic conditions.
- The drive will span 623 districts in phase II of Jal Shakti Abhiyan.
- Meetings with local influencers will be held.
- The tagline of the Catch the Rain Campaign is "Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls".

Jal Shakti Abhiyan II:

- The Jal Shakti Abhiyan was planned in two phases. The Phase I was planned between July and September, 2019 covering all the states. Phase II was to focus on states with retreating monsoon.
- This includes Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Puducherry. It mainly aims to accelerate five major water conservation areas.

DigiBoxx

- DigiBoxx is a forum for storage. It's a file sharing and cloud computing network. DigiBoxx has been revealed by Aitabh Kant, CEO of NITI Aayog.
- The announcement was made a few weeks after Google revealed that it would not be providing unrestricted free photo uploads after June 1, 2021.

About DigiBoxx:

- It offers 20 GB of free cloud storage and 100 GB of free space every month. It charges just 30 rupees a month for such large shops. DigiBoxx is the first of its kind under India's "Make in India, Store in India" scheme.
- It is a Software as a Service platform that is compliant with national security and data localization goals.
- It has a feature called "InstaShare". The feature allows users to share high resolution images, videos, large-size documents, PDFs.

NOTE:

MEGA is another Cloud Storage service that offers 50 GB free storage space, but only for a month. After a month, the company gives only 15 GB space.

PM Kisan Scheme

- The Prime Minister of India released Rs 18,000 crores under Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi. Around nine crore farmers are to be benefitted from the funds.

PM-KISAN

- It was first implemented as the Rythu Bandhu Scheme by the Government of Telangana. Under the Rythu Bandhu scheme, a certain amount of money was directly handed to eligible farmers.
- During the 2019-20 Budget, it was announced that the scheme is to be implemented as a nationwide scheme. It was first launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- Under the PM-KISAN scheme, the farmers are provided Rs 6,000 per year in three instalments. Both small and marginal farmers are eligible to enjoy the benefits of the scheme.
- The scheme completed one year in February 2020. Till then more than eight crore forty-six lakhs farmers have been covered under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi

Objective:

- The main objective of the scheme is to increase the source of income of the farmers.
- It aims to supplement the financial needs and ensure crop health and appropriate yields.

27th DECEMBER 2020

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

- Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana has recently completed 1.5 crore therapies. The Government of India has recently announced the rationalisation of the Health Benefits Plan 3.0 health package.

Key Highlights:

- Ayushman Bharat, the flagship initiative of the Government of India, has been a total success for two years. So far, 1.26 crores of hospitalizations have been covered by the scheme.

- The Government of India has invested Rs 15,772 crores on these health bills. More than 23,311 hospitals are part of the system. So far, the scheme has provided Rs 30,000 crores of savings.

About Ayushman Bharat:

- The scheme was launched in the context of the National Health Policy 2017. The goal of the programme is to fulfil the vision of universal health coverage.
- The scheme was planned to achieve the goals of sustainable development. The scheme consists of two parts, namely the Health and Wellness Center, and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

Naegleria fowleri: Brain Eating Amoeba

- Naegleria fowleri is a single celled amoeba. It's sometimes considered a brain-eating amoeba. The amoeba is now spreading quickly in the US.
- The news comes after a strange illness named Eluru was found in the districts of Andhra Pradesh.

About Naegleria fowleri

- Naegleria fowleri was first traced in the southern part of the USA. The strain grew rapidly in the northern regions due to favourable climatic conditions.
- As the name suggests, amoeba has the capacity to destroy essential parts of the body, especially the human brain, and to cause large-scale inflammation.
- The amoeba is usually found in warm fresh water. However, the climatic changes have helped the amoeba to spread even during winter. It multiplies rapidly at forty-six degree Celsius.

E-Sampada Mobile Application

- The Ministry of Urban Affairs has recently released a new smartphone application and a portal called "E-Sampada."
- The application offers a single window for facilities such as the provision of more than one lakh government residential accommodation and the allocation of office space to government organisations.

About E-Sampada

- Four eawas.nic.in, gpra.nic.in, estates.gov.in and holidayhomes.nic.in websites and two smartphone apps such as m-Ashoka5 and m-Awas have been merged as one to accomplish the "One Nation, One System" objectives.
- This will pave the way for entities to receive their resources on a single forum.
- The application would encourage ease of life for government officials and agencies.
- The automated processes in the system will lead to greater transparency.
- It also allows the user to lodge complaints, appear for virtual hearing and submit documents.

ISRO releases Chandrayaan-2 mission's initial data

- The first collection of data from Chandrayaan-2 was recently published by the Indian Space Research Organization. The data is compiled by the Planetary Data System (Version 4).
- The first collection of data was published via the PRADAN portal. ISSDC hosts the PRADAN portal (Indian Space Science Data Centre).

Chandrayaan-2:

- Chandrayaan-2 was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota on July 22, 2019. The mission aimed to land Vikram Lander on the south pole of the lunar surface. Unfortunately, the Vikram lander had crashed hard and struggled to land.
- The orbiter has been successfully positioned and is to carry out eight experiments to answer some questions on lunar physics.
- The Chandrayaan-2 had three main missions. They were the orbiter that would revolve around the moon, Vikram lander that would land on the moon surface and Pragyan rover that would explore the moon surface and observe ice.

Indian Deep Space Network:

- The Indian Deep Space Network is a network of large communication facilities and antennas intended to support interplanetary missions undertaken by India. The Indian Deep Space Network consists of ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Networks (ISTRAC).

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Green Propulsion Technology of ISRO

- ISRO is designing Green Propulsion Technologies. The technology is being developed for the Indian Human Space Travel Mission, Gaganyaan, to be launched in December 2021.
- Propulsion means that you press forward or propel the mass forward. In rockets and aircraft, propulsion is created by the application of Newton's third law, "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction."

Green Propulsion Technology of ISRO

- ISRO started designing Green Propulsion Technology in 2018. In 2018, ISRO developed the eco-friendly Glycidyl Azide polymer GAP as fuel and Ammonium Di-Nitramide as oxidizer.
- ISRO carried out technology demonstration trials containing renewable propellant variations such as kerosene, hydrogen peroxide, liquid oxygen, AND-Glycerol-water, AND-Methanol-water.
- ISRO has begun the testing of Liquid Oxygen, Liquid Hydrogen based propulsion systems for launch vehicles.

South Asia Satellite

- It is also called the GSAT-9. The satellite is operated by ISRO for the SAARC region. The satellite serves Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Maldives. Pakistan is not included in the programme.

India's First Driverless Train

- The first driverless train operations in India were initiated by the Prime Minister of India. The train is operated on the Delhi Metro's Magenta Line.

Key Highlights:

- The train had been laid out on a 38-kilometer long line named the Magenta Line. It is part of a 390-km network spread through the national capital and neighbouring cities such as Gurugram, Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Bahadurgarh.
- Driverless train operations shall be carried out only on Line 7 and Line 8 of the Delhi Metro Rail Company.
- The Magenta Line is to switch from ATP (Automatic Train Protection) and ATO (Automatic Train Operation) system to Driverless Train Operation mode.

NOTE:

The i-ATS will work with train control and signalling systems. It is suitable for national transporters to introduce Centralised Train Control.

KVIC Monpa Handmade Paper Unit

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has recently set up a Monpa handmade paper manufacturing facility. Monpa handmade paper is a thousand-year-old heritage which has been resurrected by a new team.
- The device has been set up to improve the commercial efficiency of the paper developed using the Monpa technique. The unit would also establish local jobs in Arunachal Pradesh.

About Monpa Handmade Paper

- The craft of handmade Monpa paper originated in China over a thousand years ago. The fine textured handmade paper created using the technique is called Mon Shugu.
- It is an important part of the history of nearby tribes. The article has historical and theological importance.

- The handmade Monpa paper is made from a local tree named Shugu Sheng. The tree also has medicinal values.
- Earlier Monpa handmade paper was sold to other countries such as Japan, Tibet, Bhutan and Thailand for two reasons.

1% Cash Payment Norm in GST

- Recently, the Department of Revenue reported that GST tax payers would be expected to pay at least 1% of their tax in cash. This is due to enter into practise on 1 January 2021.

1% Cash Payment Norms:

- The 1% cash transfer laws extend to all 45,000 taxpayers. This is being implemented to prevent tax evasion by making misleading invoices. To date, the CBIC has reported 12,000 cases of Input Tax Credit fraud. Around 365 people have been arrested.
- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has adopted the minimum (CBIC).
- Also, the new rule restricts the use of Input Tax Credit (ITC) to discharge GST liability.
- These laws do not apply to taxpayers where the registered person has received a refund of more than Rs 1 lakh or where the wife has paid more than Rs 1 lakh as income tax.
- The 1% cash payment standards have been included in Rule 86B of the GST.
- The updated guidelines would help to define revenue risk and dissuade fraudsters from multi-layer fraud involving the passing of fake ITCs.

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Pneumosil: India's First Pneumonia Vaccine

- The Serum Institute of India recently unveiled the first indigenously developed Pneumococcal Vaccine called Pneumosil.

Key Points:

- Pneumosil was created in conjunction with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH. It has been authorised by the Drugs Controller General of India.
- The price of Pneumosil is very cheap. It's around USD 2 per dose. This is 30% smaller than the Pneumonia Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) currently prescribed against Pneumonia in India.
- The Clinical trials of the vaccine were conducted in Gambia and India.

NOTE:

India accounts for 20% of the world's pneumonia deaths. 50% of the world's annual pneumococcal infant deaths occur in four African and Asian countries. It is India, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan..

INS Kiltan

- INS Kiltan arrived at Sihanoukville Port, Cambodia under Project Sagar III. The ship is to provide 15 tonnes of HADR (Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief) for the floods in Cambodia.
- Assistance shall be given to the National Disaster Management Committee of Cambodia.

Key Highlights:

- The mission is part of India's HADR assistance to foreign countries. SAGAR is a defence and development agency for those in the country.
- It reiterates India's position as a trusted ally, first responder and preferred security partner. Earlier, India sent 15 tonnes of assistance to Vietnam under the mission.

About SAGAR:

- SAGAR initiative aims at providing security, capacity building, collective action, maritime engagement and sustainable development. India's greatest strength of SAGAR is that it is located in the centre of Indian Ocean.

WHO COVID-19 App

- The World Health Organisation has recently released a smartphone application called COVID-19. The programme provides users with the newest updates to Covid-19. The programme is called the "WHO COVID-19" app.

Key Points:

- The mobile application launched by the World Health Organisation will provide trusted information from experts at the organisation and regional partners. It will provide regular updates and notification about the scientific findings of covid-19.
- The users can learn about the symptoms of covid-19 disease. The application also provides information on how users can protect themselves and their communities from the virus.

NOTE:

The WHO academy mobile application was developed by the World Health Organization for health workers in the fight against COVID-19. The application is called "WHO Academy COVID-19 Mobile Learning App".

Vistadome Coach

- The Ministry of Railways announced that Indian Railways has successfully completed the trial run of new Vistadome tourist coaches. These coaches were manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai.

About Vistadome Tourist Coaches

- There are currently 13 Vistadome coaches operating in India. They run in Araku Valley, Dadar and Madgaon, Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway, Kangra Valley Railway, Kalka-Shimla Railway, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, Matheran Hill Railway.
- Vistadome coaches are made with glass roof tops and large windows to give a panoramic view.

- The coaches are also fitted with the controlled opalescence in the glass roofs.
- The coaches have a passenger information system, rotatable seats, automatic sliding doors, white doors for persons with disabilities, Mini pantry.

30th DECEMBER 2020

Digital Ocean Application of INCOIS

- The Digital Ocean Applications were launched by the Ministry of Earth Sciences to share information on marine data and forecast services.

Key Points:

- Applications were introduced under the Digital Ocean Platform developed by INCOIS. The Indian National Ocean Information Center (INCOIS) offers advisory services and information to different stakeholders.
- This includes data focused on oceanographic studies, ocean condition forecasting, advisory services such as fishing zone notifications, high-wave alerts, storm surges, tsunami early warnings and oil spill.
- The Digital Ocean Platform is to be promoted as a platform of capacity building on ocean data management in all Indian Ocean Rim Countries.

About IORA:

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association comprises fourteen members. They are India, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Maldives, Oman, Mozambique, Australia, Indonesia, Kenya, Iran, Malaysia, Madagascar, Singapore, South Africa, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, UAE, Thailand and Yemen.

India's First Social Impact Bonds

- The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) and the United Nations Development Programme, India, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create India's first Social Impact Bond.

- A Social Benefit Bond is also called a pay-for-success bond or a pay-for-success bond. A Social Impact Bond is effectively a deal with a public service authority where it pays for better social results.
- It is a form of outcome-based contracting. It aims at improving social outcomes for a specific group of citizens.

Key Features of Social Impact Bonds:

- They run for a set amount of time.
- They should not allow for a set rate of return.
- The result of the Social Impact Bonds depends solely on the effectiveness of the social outcome.
- Variables such as reinvestment risk, interest rate risk or price risk are not affected.
- They are prone to inflation threats.
- It is hard to determine the success of Social Impact Bonds as they are based on social impacts.

Global Pravasi Rishta portal and app

- The Government of India launched the Global Pravasi Rishta Portal and Mobile app. The application aims to connect the Indian Diaspora spread all over the world.

Key Points:

- The Global Pravasi Rishta Portal and Smartphone app will help bind the 3.12 crores of Indian diaspora around the globe.
- It would establish three-way contact between the Indian Missions (i.e. the embassies), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Indian Diaspora. Indian diaspora means a dispersed community of Indian descent.
- The app is to be used by the Indian Diaspora and the portal by the missions.

■ NOTE:

Ministry of External Affairs launched the Global Pravasi Rishta Portal and Mobile app. It was launched by the Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan.

SAHAYAK-NG: India's first indigenous Air Dropped Container

- The SAHAYAK-NG, an air droppable container was tested successfully by the Defence Ministry. It is the first indigenously developed air droppable container.

Main features:

- The SAHAYAK-NG can carry a payload up to fifty kilograms.
- It can be dropped from heavy aircraft.
- It is GPS enabled.
- It is an advanced version of SHAYAK Mk I.
- The SAHAYAK-NG containers are completely water tight.
- They are designed to withstand water entry shocks.
- The rate of descent of the SAHAYAK-NG container is controlled by a parachute system.

■ NOTE:

The SHAYAK-NG was developed by the Defense Research Development Organization (DRDO) and Avantel, a private corporation. NTSL, Visakhapatnam and ARDE, Agra are the other organisations interested in the creation of SAHAYAK-NG.

Akash Missile System

- Recently the Government approved the export of the Akash missile system. Also, a committee has been formed for fast approvals of export of the missile system.

About Akash Missile:

- Akash is a short-range, surface-to-air, indigenous missile with a range of 25 km.
- It was developed by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. The Integrated Guided Missile Production Program began in 1984.
- It is produced by Bharat Dynamics Limited.

- The range of this missile is 25 km, it has the capability to hit its target in any weather.
- This missile can go up to 18,000 meters in the air.
- It has the capability to destroy fighter aircraft, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles.

31st DECEMBER 2020

Nagaland declared Disturbed Area under AFSPA

- The Ministry of Home Affairs recently declared Nagaland as “Disturbed Area” for the next six months under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

Current scenario:

- Nagaland was declared as a “disturbed area” for a period of six months on June 30, 2020. The state has been under AFSPA for more than six decades now. The act was not withdrawn even after signing the agreement between Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland and Gol.
- Nagaland has been declared as ‘disturbed area’ as there have been killings, extortion and loot in various parts of the state. Even after eighty rounds of negotiations for more than eighteen years, the demands of NSCN-IM do not seem feasible.

About Disturbed area:

- A disturbed area is declared by notification under Section 3 of AFSPA. It is invoked in places where the use of armed forces is necessary to aid the civil power.
- The Governor of the state or the central government can declare the whole or part of the state or union territory as disturbed area. The State Government can only suggest if the act is required or not.

PFRDA: Online option to exit from NPS

- The Pension Fund Regulator recently announced that the subscribers can use online mode to exit from the National Pension System.

Key Points:

- Under the current process, the National Pension Subscribers have to physically approach their Points of Presence to complete the withdrawal request.
- They have to submit withdrawal forms along with other supporting documents for authorization by the Points of Presence.

About PFRDA:

- PFRDA is Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority. The PFRDA was established in 2003.
- It was made a statutory body under Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 2013. It ensures orderly growth and development of the pension market.

Massive wildfire in Dzukou Valley

- A huge wildfire in Dzukou valley located on the Manipur-Nagaland border caused severe damage to the environment.

Key Points:

- According to the Forest Survey of India, 2020, the forests of Chhattisgarh, Mizoran, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha are most vulnerable to forest fires.
- When a forest fire is detected in India by the MODIS and VIIRS instruments (installed on satellites), the information is passed to the Forest Survey of India (FSI).
- The FSI analyses the data overlaying the digitised boundaries and pinpoints the location to the exact forest department.

NOTE:

- The MODIS instrument is placed in two NASA satellites such as Terra and Aqua.
- The VIIRS is placed on the Suomi NPP satellite. Suomi NPP is the Suomi National Polar orbiting Partnership launched by NASA.