

**PRELIMS EXCLUSIVE**

• **Appointments**

- **Nandan Nilkeni Panel:** SC has sets up panel to suggest reforms for holding competitive exams.
- **Nandan Nilekani Panel** has been setup by RBI to strengthen the Digital Payments Ecosystem.
- **Justice AK Sikri** has been nominated as Executive Chairman of NALSA (National legal service Authority).
- **Sanjay Jain, K M Nataraj** have been appointed as Additional Solicitor Generals.
- **Pranav R Mehta** has become the President of the Global Solar Council.
- **Gita Gopinath** has become the first female chief economist of IMF.
- The MD and CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited (ZEEL), **Punit Goenka** has been elected as the **new chairman** of **Broadcast Audience Research Council of India** (BARC). Goenka was the founder Chairman of BARC India. He has been re-elected for this post. BARC India is a **Joint Industry Company** founded by stakeholder bodies that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers, and Advertising and Media Agencies.
- IPS officer Kumar Rajesh Chandra (1985 batch) has been appointed as the new Director General (DG) of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). SSB is a paramilitary force that has been tasked to guard the 1,751-km **Indo-Nepal** border since 2001 and the 699-km **Indo-Bhutan** border since 2004. It is also designated as the lead intelligence gathering agency on these two open borders.

• **Awards**

- **2019 Bharat Ratna award:** It has been bestowed upon former President Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika. Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika were awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously.
  - Professor C.N.R Rao of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore has just been awarded the **First Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research**. The award has been given by the **Centre for Advanced Materials of the UAE**.
  - The ambassadors of **Pakistan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Malta, and Bosnia-Herzegovina** in China were conferred with Silk Road Super Ambassador Awards for their contribution to **the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
  - Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani has been posthumously awarded **India's highest peacetime gallantry award, the Ashok Chakra**. Wani holds the distinction of being the **first Kashmiri** to be conferred the Ashoka Chakra.
- The **world's first television channel dedicated to human rights was launched in London** with a promise to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms. The International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR) said its web-based channel would bring human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.
  - A fortnight of events named '**Shehri Samridhi Utsav**', focusing on urban livelihoods was organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. The event aims at extending the outreach of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable, showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of SHG members to the other government schemes.

- Costing 1.4 billion rupees (\$19.6 million), India's first national film museum was launched in Mumbai, tracing the evolution of Indian cinema. The government-funded **National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC)** boasts stacks of memorabilia, recordings and film-making tools as well as interactive touch screens where visitors can watch clips from memorable movies.
- Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) has announced the launch of a full-fledged bachelor's programme in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology from the new academic session, a first for the country and only the third globally. IIT-H is already offering an Masters in Technology programme in AI-Machine Learning (ML). Besides IIT, Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), both of which are in the US, offer full-fledged B.Tech programmes in AI.
- **Corruption Perception Index:** The Transparency International's CPI says Denmark is the world least corrupt while Somalia has been ranked last.
- **Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2014:** It aim to provide reservation in government jobs for Pahari community.
- **The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya:** They celebrated their 47<sup>th</sup> Statehood Day on 21<sup>st</sup> January. They became full-fledged states on January 21, 1972.
- **Train 18:** India's fastest indigenous train, Train 18 has been named as Vande Bharat Express and will ply between Delhi and Varanasi.
- Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar inaugurated the **Atal Setu** on the Mandovi river in Goa.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT)** has become India's only port to get listed among the top 30 global container ports.
- **Numaligarh refinery (Assam):** Union Cabinet has approved its expansion.
- **One family-one job scheme:** The Chief Minister of Sikkim Pawan Kumar Chamling has announced the One family one job scheme to provide employment to the youth of Sikkim.
- **Tata Steel:** Its Netherlands plant recognised as the Factory of the Future.
- **Arunachal:** India's longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge inaugurated in Arunachal Pradesh.
- According to the Brand Finance Global 500, 2019 report released at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Tata has climbed from the **104<sup>th</sup> position to 86<sup>th</sup>** this year and is the **only Indian brand** in the top 100.
- The central banks of United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Saudi Arabia are co-developing a **digital currency** called "**Aber.**" It will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through blockchains and distributed ledgers technologies. It will also establish an additional means for the central financial transfer systems of the two countries and enable banks to directly deal with each other in conducting financial remittances. The digital currency is backed by fiat currencies of the two nations (*Fiat currency is legal tender whose value is backed by the government that issued it*).
- **Palestine** has assumed the **chairmanship of G77**. **Egypt** was the **previous Chair** of the Group.
  - Palestine is a **non-member Observer** State at UN. However, UN General Assembly approved a resolution that enabled additional privileges and rights to it. It included privileges such as participating in international conferences held under its auspices, for the duration of its role as G77 Chair.
  - It was established in 1964 by 77 developing countries in Geneva.

- G77 is the largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries including India. The coalition has 134 members, along with China which aligns itself with the bloc.
- It claims to provide the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the UN system and promote South-South cooperation for development.
- **Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM)** was started in January 2019 after the killing of Naqeebullah Mehsud, a young Pashtun from Waziristan in Karachi. The main aim of the movement was to highlight the plight of the Pashtun community, the second largest ethnic group in Pakistan, constituting nearly 15.42 per cent of the population.
- Pakistan has abolished the long-standing facility of on-arrival visas for Afghan nationals. It has cited security risks amid a spike in terror attacks as a major reason behind this move. Earlier, Afghan nationals were granted a 30-day visa on arrival at the entry points but now they will be required to apply for a visa from Pakistani missions in Afghanistan.
- **Panda Bonds:** Pakistan's cabinet has approved the issuance of **first-ever renminbi-denominated bonds** to raise **loans from China's capital markets**. It is being viewed by many analysts as a step forward to give the **Chinese currency a status at par with the US dollar**. Panda bonds are Chinese renminbi-denominated bonds from a non-Chinese issuer, sold in the People's Republic of China. The Philippines had also issued Panda bond in 2018 and became the first ASEAN country to do so.
- Indian Prime Minister had inaugurated the **9<sup>th</sup> edition of Vibrant Gujarat Summit** in Gandhinagar on 18<sup>th</sup> January. Along with many national and international delegates, the three day summit saw the participation of the **heads of five countries** - Uzbekistan, Rwanda, Denmark, Czech Republic and Malta. At the summit, Indian PM set the target to **get India in top 50** under Global Ranking of **World Bank's Doing Business Report**.
- NASSCOM in collaboration with Municipal Governments of Guiyang and Dalian has launched **Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP)**. It is an initiative to bring Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises closer to each other on a single AI (Artificial Intelligence) enabled platform. SIDCOP is a **boundary-less marketplace**. It will offer this opportunity for Chinese enterprises in order to assist them in operational optimization and adopting industry best practices in business solutions.
- This platform could be useful to connect with top providers from India and help Chinese enterprises source the right solution providers for their projects.
- India and Pakistan has exchanged - **for the 28th consecutive year** - a list of their **nuclear installations**. This was done under a bilateral agreement that prohibits them from attacking each other's atomic facilities. The **Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear installations between India and Pakistan** was signed on December 31, 1988 and came into force on January 27, 1991. It says that the two countries will inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the agreement on January 1 of every calendar year.
- The Defence Minister has inaugurated the **Diffo Bridge**. The bridge is built over the Diffo River on Roing-Koron-Paya road in Lower Dibang Valley District in Arunachal Pradesh.
  - The bridge was constructed by the Project Udayak, Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
  - This bridge would provide **uninterrupted access between Dibang valley and Lohit valley** region of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh and an **all-weather Road** to the troops deployed on the China Border.

- BRO develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries. It is headquartered at New Delhi.

**Project Udayak** was raised on 01 Jun 1990 at **Doomdooma, Assam** at the peak of militancy. The Project was to take on responsibility of roads and other works in erstwhile districts of Siang, Lohit, Dibang Valley and Tirap of Arunachal Pradesh and Mon, Tuensang and Mokokchung districts of Nagaland.

- **IMBEX 2018-19** is the second edition of India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise which was conducted at Chandimandir Military Station that houses the headquarters of the Western Command. The aim of this joint training programme was to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peace keeping operations under the UN flag.
- The **Indian navy** launched the first of its kind *coastal defence exercise* named "**Sea Vigil**". It was aimed to **test the efficacy of coastal safety procedures** put into place after the 26/11 Mumbai attack. The conduct of the **exercise is being facilitated** by the *Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Shipping, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Fisheries, Customs, State Governments and other central and state agencies*. It will test inter and intra agency activation and technical cooperation like real time sharing of information.
- **India Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX)-2019** will be conducted at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering, Pune. It will be conducted with more than a dozen African countries & India. It aims at synergising humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has landed its **Antonov-32 (AN-32) transport aircraft** at the Sikkim's Pakyong airport. This is the **first landing by an AN-32 class** of aircraft at this airfield, which is one of the highest airfields in India. Following the Doklam standoff in 2017, India has been ramping up infrastructure along the nearly 4,000 km border with China. The **first IAF aircraft** to have landed at the airport was a Dornier last year.
- The Naval Air Station (NAS) Shibpur has been commissioned as **INS Kohassa**.
  - It is Indian Navy's third naval air facility in the strategically located Andaman & Nicobar islands.
  - The other two Naval Air Bases in the Andaman and Nicobar region are **INS Utkrosh at Port Blair** and **INS Baaz at Campbell Bay**.
  - It has been done as part of **efforts to expand operational presence** in the Indian Ocean where China has been increasing its military presence.
  - The Naval Air Station has been developed as a **dual use military and civil airfield**. It will help in **providing impetus to the Centre's UDAN scheme** and will complement the **Navy's role as a net security provider** in the strategic Indian Ocean Region.
  - INS Kohassa has been named after a **white-bellied sea eagle**, which is a large bird of prey, **endemic to Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- China has developed an **advanced compact size maritime radar** which can maintain constant surveillance over an area of the size of India. The domestically developed radar system will enable the Chinese navy to fully monitor China's seas and spot incoming threats from enemy ships, aircraft and missile. So far, traditional surveillance systems enabled China to monitor only about 20 per cent of its maritime territory. However, with the new system it can cover the whole area including the South China Sea, Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.