

## **PRELIMS EXCLUSIVE**

- **Appointments**
  - **Rishi Kumar Shukla** has been appointed as new CBI Director.
  - **Govind Prasad Sharma** has been appointed as Chairman of National Book Trust (NBT).
  - **Chandramouli Ramanathan**: The United Nations has appointed him to be one of the topmost positions in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.
  - **Hina Jaiswal** became the First Woman Flight Engineer of IAF.
  - **Sushil Chandra** has been appointed as new Election Commissioner.
- **Nilavembu Kudineer**, also called Nilavembu Kashayam, is being distributed to the people in Tamil Nadu to combat dengue and chikungunya. Nilavembu is a small plant and is widely known as the king of bitter herbs. It is a natural antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, analgesic herb, which is used for the treatment of all types of fever associated with body ache. Its scientific name is *Andrographis paniculata*.
- The foundation stone of the permanent campus of FTI was recently laid by the Prime Minister at *Jollang-Rakap (Jote), Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh*. This is the **third Film and Television Institute of Ministry of I&B**, the first two being *FTII Pune and SRFTI Kolkata*. It is the first Film and Television Institute of entire North-East.
- Abu Dhabi has decided to include **Hindi as the third official language** used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English, as part of a move designed to improve access to justice. The move will help the Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier. The Indian community in the UAE, numbering 2.6 million, constitutes 30% of the total population and is the largest expatriate community in the country.
- Uttar Pradesh has launched '**Sarthi Sandesh Vahini**' vehicles, that will provide family planning information to the viewers through various documentaries and films.. The 'Sarthi Sandesh Vahini' is a mission started by the state family welfare department with an aim to spread awareness regarding family planning in urban and rural areas.
- '**Waste to Wonder Park**', built by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) was recently inaugurated. It is the first-of-its-kind tourist attraction in the world, with the replicas of the Taj Mahal, the Great Pyramid of Giza, Eiffel Tower, Leaning Tower of Pisa, Christ the Redeemer statue of Rio de Janeiro, Rome's Colosseum, and the Statute of Liberty. The replicas of all seven wonders of world has been built with eco-friendly, self sustainable material, and has its own solar and wind power generation
- In the budget presented for 2019-20, the Assam government announced the launch of **Arundhati Scheme** which talks of providing one 'tola' gold to parents for marriage of their daughters. An amount of Rs 300 Crore has been earmarked in the Budget for this scheme. Families with annual income of below Rs 5 lakh and the first two live offsprings of a family and only in cases where the bride and the groom have both attained the legal age of marriage will be eligible for the scheme. The scheme will not only make the poor parents across the state happy but is also likely to reduce social evils like talaq and divorce.
- **Priority For Kannadigas In Private Sector Jobs**
  - Breathing life into more than a three-decade old committee report, the Karnataka government has decided to amend rules to give primacy to Kannadigas in jobs under Group C and D category in the private sector.

- The **Mahishi Committee** was constituted in 1984 to recommend job opportunities for Kannadigas in Karnataka and it submitted the report two years later.
- The report prepared in 1986 recommended job reservations for Kannadigas in government jobs, public sector units and even in the private sector.
- Establishments set up in Karnataka, especially those that directly or indirectly benefit from the government through industrial concessions, tax concessions, land tax rebate, energy rebate or industrial policy incentives, will have to give priority to Kannadigas in Group C and D jobs, subject to qualification.
- Along with the IT/BT sector that is already exempt from the recommendations, sectors that demand technical knowledge will also not be compelled to implement it.
- **Gujjars:** Rajasthan Backward Classes Amendment Bill, 2019 has been passed to provide provides five per cent quota in jobs and educational institutions to Gurjars, Banjaras, Gadia Lohars, Raikas and Gadaria communities.
- **Rajasthan Assembly** has passed Bill to Scrap Minimum Education Qualification for Civic Polls.
- **World Press Freedom Index:** India has stumbled nine places to 140<sup>th</sup> position in the list of 179 countries in the latest World Press Freedom Index.
- **SWAYATT** stands for Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions on Government e Marketplace (GeM). GeM is an online portal through which procurement of common use goods & services required by various Government Departments/ Organisations/ PSUs is being done. SWAYATT initiative will facilitate the training and registrations on this portal and encourage participation of MSME sector, women entrepreneurs and start-ups in public procurement through GeM.
- RBI announced that **FPIs will now be allowed to invest more than 20 % of its corporate bond portfolio in a single corporate**. Earlier, there was a cap of 20 per cent on investment in single corporate to encourage FPIs to maintain a wider portfolio of assets. The cap has been removed to encourage more foreign investments and order to encourage a wider spectrum of investors to access the Indian corporate debt market.
- Israeli **spacecraft Beresheet** (lunar lander) has been launched into space by SpaceX.
  - Israel seeks to become **only the fourth country** to successfully land on the moon, after Russia, the US and China.
  - The spacecraft — called Beresheet, Hebrew for Genesis or “In The Beginning” — will take nearly two months to reach the moon.
  - Beresheet will measure the magnetic field at the landing site, and send back data and pictures.
- Macedonia has signed an accord to join NATO to become the **30th member** of the US-led alliance. The admittance of a new member highlighted that all European nations who meet the entrance criteria could join the regional alliance. However, Moscow has continually rejected NATO's position, saying that by taking in Balkan members, the alliance is undermining security in the region.
- **40th Anniversary Of Islamic Revolution**
  - Iran is marking the 40th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution that **topped the shah and ended centuries of monarchy** in the country.
  - On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from France after 14 years in exile to become the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- Known as the **Ten Days of Dawn**, the anniversary ends on February 11.
- On this date **Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's** government collapsed, bringing hard-line **Shi'ite clerics to power**.
- **Carnot Prize**
  - Union minister Piyush Goyal has been given the Carnot Prize 2018 for the transformational changes brought by him during his tenure as Union Minister of Power.
  - THE CARNOT PRIZE is the **Kleinman Center's annual recognition** of distinguished **contributions to energy policy** through scholarship or practice.
  - This prize is named in memory of French scientist **Sadi Carnot**, who in 1824 published **Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire**, which became the **basis for the second law of thermodynamics**.
- **'Vat Cau' Festival**
  - The traditional Vat Cau Festival is an important celebration in **Vietnam**.
  - The annual festival takes place on the **sixth day** of the first month of the Lunar New Year.
  - The origins of the sport are from many centuries ago and began as a **training exercise for soldiers**.
  - The festival aims to strengthen solidarity between communities and pay tribute to the spirit of Linh Lang Dai Vuong.
  - The sport is a contest between four different coloured teams of eight men with each team wrestling for possession of the ball.
- **Egypt Takes Over Chairmanship Of African Union**
  - Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi was elected chair of the African Union.
  - This decision was taken at an African leaders' summit in Addis Ababa.
  - Egypt takes over the chairmanship of the African Union at a time that Cairo remains at odds with Ethiopia over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.
  - The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 member states located on the continent of Africa.
  - The vision of the African Union is that of: **"An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena."**
- Iran has successfully tested its new **Hoveizeh long-range cruise missile**. The Hoveizeh, part of the Soumar family of cruise missiles unveiled in 2015, has a range of over 1,350 km (840 miles) and is designed to be used against ground targets. Iran has voluntarily limited the range of its missiles to 2,000 km (1,250 miles), sufficient to reach Israel and Western bases in the Middle East.
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch the '**India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative**'. The India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative will combat marine pollution, which is one of the fastest growing environmental concerns.
- **16<sup>th</sup> Russia-India-China (RIC) Foreign Ministerial Meeting** was held on 27 February 2019 in Wuzhen, China. RIC is a trilateral grouping of Russia, India and China that has met annually since 2002.
- **Pre-Departure Orientation Programme**

- Given the need to orient potential migrant workers with regard to language, culture, do's and don'ts in the destination country, the emigration process and welfare measures, a Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) programme has been launched.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** in collaboration with **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** is conducting the PDOT programme under the **Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PKVY)**.
- The **National Skill Development Corporation** is the implementing agency for this programme.
- **IORA Meet on Disaster Risk Management**
  - The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has organized a meeting of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Cluster Group on Disaster Risk Management (DRM).
  - It was organized to strengthen **cooperation in disaster response**.
  - Participants at the meet drew a draft work plan for DRM in IORA and deliberated on the need for establishing a DRM Core Group to take forward the agreed objectives under the Work Plan.
  - IORA is an **intergovernmental organisation** and has many disaster-prone countries among its **22 members and nine dialogue partners**.
  - **Disaster Response Management (DRM)** is one of its priority areas and its **Action Plan (2017-2021)** has specific goals to improve resilience in IORA countries.
- **Afghanistan Begins Exports To India Through Iran's Chabahar Port**
  - Afghanistan began exports to India through the **Chabahar port in Iran**.
  - This is the **first time** Afghanistan has exported goods to India bypassing the Pakistan route.
  - Twenty-three trucks carrying 57 tonnes of dried fruits, textiles, carpets and mineral products were dispatched from the **western Afghan city of Zaranj to Chabahar in Iran**.
  - The consignment will be **shipped from Chabahar to Mumbai**.
  - Iran's Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country.
- **IOC Suspends India From Hosting International Sports Events**
  - International Olympic Committee (IOC) has suspended India from hosting sporting events.
  - The issue arose when India refused visa requests from two Pakistan shooters expected to participate in the ongoing ISSF World Cup.
  - The India event from February 20 to 28 serves as the first of eight ISSF World Cups, which also serve as qualifiers for the 2020 Olympic Games.
  - According to IOC, this move was against the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter, in particular the principles of non-discrimination.
  - In a similar turn of events, the 2015 Asian Shooting Championships in Kuwait lost its qualification status for the Rio Olympics after an Israeli delegate was denied a visa.
  - Last month, the International Paralympic Committee stripped Malaysia of the right to host the 2019 World Para-Swimming Championships after the country banned Israeli athletes from participating.
- **Freedom Of The City Of London**
  - SBI's regional head in the UK, Sanjiv Chadha, has been honoured with the '**Freedom of the City of London**' award, in recognition of his contribution to promoting the bilateral relations.
  - Mr Chadha has been instrumental in **expanding the bank's presence** across the UK, and in **boosting wider bilateral ties in financial services**.
  - The award is given by the **City of London Corporation**.

- It dates back to the **13th century** (1237) and has since developed into an honour bestowed upon individuals **who make an impact in the financial hub of London**, referred to as the City or the Square Mile.
- The previous Indian recipient of the honour is Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Other recipients include author J K Rowling and actor Dame Judi Dench.
- The 'Parmanu Tech 2019' conference has been organised by the **Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**. The conference discussed issues related to Nuclear Energy and Radiation Technologies.
- **Exercise Cutlass Express 2019**
  - Annual multinational training exercise '**CUTLASS EXPRESS – 19**' was held from 27 Jan- 06 Feb 19.
  - The aim of the exercise was to improve law enforcement capacity, promote regional security and progress inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating nations for the purpose of **interdicting illegal maritime activity** in the Western Indian Ocean.
  - From India, **INS Trikand**, a front-line warship of the Indian Navy, participated in this exercise.
  - The ship is a part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet and operates under the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, headquartered at Mumbai.
- **Sela Tunnel Project**
  - Foundation stone for the Sela Tunnel Project in Arunachal Pradesh has been laid by the Prime Minister. Once completed, the project would provide **all-weather connectivity to Tawang and forward areas**.
  - The 171-km stretch between **Bomdila and Tawang on the National Highway 13** will be accessible throughout the year.
  - It is being constructed by the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** and is expected to be completed in the next three years.
  - It covers a total distance of 12.04 kilometers and consists of two tunnels of 1790 and 475 meters each. Upon completion, it will reduce the **travel time from Tezpur to Tawang** by more than one hour.
  - Also, travellers using the tunnel would be **able to avoid the dangerous snow-covered Sela** which is situated at a height of 13,700 feet.
  - Not only will it help the local population, but it will also be strategically more important against the backdrop of Chinese aggression at the border.
- **Defence Innovation Hubs**
  - The Innovations for Defence Excellence (**iDEX**) framework of the Government envisages setting up and managing independent **Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs)**. iDEX has announced setting up of **two DIHs in Tamil Nadu (Coimbatore) and Maharashtra (Nashik)**.
  - These hubs will serve as platforms where innovators can get information about needs and feedback from the Services directly and create solutions for India's major defence platforms.
  - This structure is also geared towards attracting more innovators to work for the defence sector in India.
  - The Defence Innovation Organisation is a not for profit company funded by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) with its headquarter at **Bengaluru**.
  - iDEX functions as an executive arm of The Defence Innovation Organisation, and aim to create an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace.

- **Dare to Dream Contest**
  - The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has launched 'Dare to Dream' contest.
  - The aim of this contest is to encourage startups and individuals to come up with innovative defence and aerospace technologies.
  - The winning entries, which should specify the plan of executing it into a prototype, stand to get one of five prizes ranging from ₹3 lakh to ₹10 lakh in two categories.
  - Areas included in the contest are Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Systems, Cybersecurity, Hypersonic Technologies, Smart Materials, Quantum Computing, and Soldier as a System.
- **Exercise Topchi**
  - Exercise Topchi is an annual military exercise conducted by Indian Army to demonstrate its artillery firepower.
  - The event took place at the vast firing ranges at Deolali Camp near Nahik.
  - Besides artillery power, the aviation and surveillance capabilities were also showcased.
  - The Army's aviation assets included the indigenous advanced light helicopter, light combat helicopter, Cheetah & Chetak helicopters.
- **Exercise Vayu Shakti**
  - The Indian Air Force carried out a mega exercise in a firepower demonstration close to the border with Pakistan at Pokhran.
  - The IAF showcased firepower capability of indigenously-developed platforms like Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) and efficacy of Akash surface-to-air missile and Astra air-to-air missile.
  - Vayu Shakti and Gagan Shakti are two important exercises held by Indian Airforce.
  - While Vayu Shakti demonstrates the IAF's ability to strike targets on the ground, exercise Gagan Shakti focusses on air to air combat.
- **Exercise 'Sampriti 2019'**
  - Exercise Sampriti is the joint military exercise between India and Bangladesh.
  - Sampriti 2019 was conducted in Tangail, Bangladesh.
  - This was the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of this exercise which is aimed to increase mutual cooperation, bonhomie and camaraderie between the armies of both the countries.
  - This exercise started in 2009 as a platoon-level exercise and graduated to a company-level exercise in 2015 onwards.
- **YSMS: A peer-to-peer software service**
  - Intelligence agencies in J&K suspect that Jaish-e-Muhammed handlers of the Pulwama bomber had been using a **peer-to-peer software service - YSMS - or a similar mobile application** to correspond with him.
  - The YSMS uses an ultra-high radio frequency model to send encrypted text messages.
  - In essence, a radio set is attached to a cellular phone with no SIM card inside it.
  - The radio set is a small transmitter with WiFi capability. It is the WiFi that is used to connect the mobile.
  - The receiver should be in "line of sight" from sender's phone for proper communication.
  - YSMS application has been available on the Dark Web since 2012.

- However, terror outfits in Pakistan have now developed a new version which uses a frequency which has not been detected by any monitoring device since December.