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**MONTHLY UPDATES ON
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WILEY

National

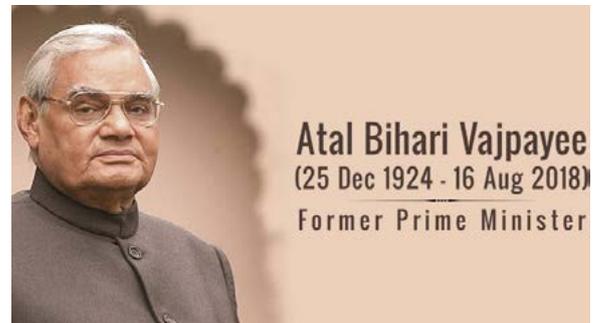
- ⊙ The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, **Narendra Singh Tomar** virtually inaugurated **Honey Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO)** Programme in five states, for producing honey. It aims to address the issues faced by the beekeeping industry and also help in achieving the goal of increasing farmer's income. These 5 FPOs will be set up by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED). They will be set up at

 - (i) East Champaran (Bihar)
 - (ii) Morena (Madhya Pradesh)
 - (iii) Bharatpur (Rajasthan)
 - (iv) Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)
 - (v) Sunderbans (West Bengal)
- ⊙ **National Navy Day** is observed on December 4 with the theme of **Indian Navy Combat Ready, Credible & Cohesive**. It is celebrated to highlight achievements and role of the naval force to the country. The day is marked in recognition of the launch of Operation Trident during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971. On December 4 in 1971, the Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels and also killed over 500 Pakistani Navy personnel, meanwhile, the Indian side suffered no losses.
- ⊙ The Union Cabinet has given its approval for **Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)** to boost employment in the formal sector by encouraging the businesses to do fresh hiring amid the pandemic. It will also incentivize the creation of new employment opportunities under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0. The Cabinet has approved an expenditure of ₹ 1,584 crores for the current financial year and ₹ 22,810 crores for the entire scheme period from 2020 to 2023.
- ⊙ The historical fort cities of Gwalior and Orchha in Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of **UNESCO's world heritage cities** under its The World Heritage Cities Programme. As per this plan, UNESCO will suggest best measures and resources for the development and beautification of these places under the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape recommendations. After this Inclusion, the total number of UNESCO World Heritage Cities of India will increase to 40.
- ⊙ According to the report released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, India has been dropped two spots to 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 **Human Development Index**. Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland,

Hong Kong and Iceland, as the report showed. On the other side, Niger is the lowest ranked country at 189, placed among Low human development category, with a score of 0.394.

- ⊙ **NITI Aayog** has released a white paper titled **Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India** on December 14, 2020. It is a continuation of the work on Health Systems Strengthening. The building blocks for this vision are an interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states.
- ⊙ The **World Bank** has approved 4 Indian projects worth over \$800 million and these are:

 - (i) \$400 million for Second Accelerating India's COVID-19 Social Protection Response Program.
 - (ii) \$100 million for Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth Project (CHIRAAG).
 - (iii) \$68 million for enhancing classroom teaching and resources project in Nagaland.
 - (iv) \$250 million Second Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2).
- ⊙ In India, **Good Governance Day** is observed annually on 25th December on the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna and former-Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.



It was established in 2014 to honour Prime Minister Vajpayee by fostering awareness among the Indian people of accountability in government. In keeping with this principle, it has been declared to be a working day for the government.

Economy

- ⊙ The six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headed by **Governor Shaktikanta Das**, has decided to maintain the status quo on policy rate amid sticky rate of inflation. At this point, the repo rate or the rate at which RBI lends to banks stands unchanged at 4 per cent. The reverse repo rate also stayed unchanged at 3.35 per cent. The MPC committee members voted unanimously in

favour of the decision. RTGS will soon be made 24×7 in the next few days.

- ⊙ Private lender YES Bank has collaborated with French payment services company Worldline to launch an **SMS Pay** functionality on POS terminals, which would allow merchants to accept contactless and remote payments from their customers.
- ⊙ The private lender **ICICI Bank** has launched a new version of its mobile payment app called **iMobile Pay**, to offer payment and banking services to customers of any bank.



The latest version of the app is interoperable and will now allow payments and other banking services to even those customers who do not hold an ICICI Bank account.

- ⊙ The Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the licence of **Karad Janata Sahakari Bank Ltd.** in Maharashtra, as it does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. As such, it does not comply with the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. More than 99 per cent of the depositors of the bank will get full payment of their deposits from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).
- ⊙ Bank of Baroda (BoB) has recently launched the **Atmanirbhar Women Scheme** as part of its Baroda Gold Loan. This scheme aims to target the self-reliant woman in India. Under the scheme, the bank is offering loans at 0.50 per cent concession for women. The bank under the gold loan scheme is offering agri-gold loan at 0.25 per cent concession and for a retail loan at 0.50 per cent concession.
- ⊙ RBL Bank and ICICI Prudential have joined hands under a bancassurance partnership. 398 RBL Bank branches across 28 states will distribute ICICI Prudential Life's protection and savings products. The protection products of ICICI Prudential Life will help the bank's customers to develop a strong financial plan and its long-term savings products will help the customers of the bank to achieve their financial goals.

- ⊙ **Quarterly Return filing & Monthly Payment of Taxes (QRMP)** scheme was launched by the Central government for small taxpayers under the GST system. Taxpayers with an aggregate annual turnover of up to ₹ 5 crore in the preceding financial year and have filed their October GSTR-3B (sales) return by November 30, 2020, are eligible for this scheme.

Science and Technology

- ⊙ Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has partnered with a global machine connectivity solutions company, Skylotech India to launch satellite-based **narrow band-Internet of things (NB-IoT)**. This initiative is the world's first satellite-based NB-IoT network.
- ⊙ The Bengaluru-based space-technology startup **Pixxel**, has signed a pact with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to launch its first remote-sensing satellite on ISRO's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket in early 2021.



Earlier, the startup had planned to launch this satellite towards the end of 2020 and on a Russian Soyuz rocket. Pixxel aims to put a constellation of 30 earth observation micro-satellites into a sun-synchronous orbit by mid-2023.

- ⊙ The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has set up a dedicated Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre named **NETRA**, at its ISTRAC campus at Peenya, Bengaluru. The ISRO SSA Control Centre 'NETRA' was formally inaugurated by ISRO Chairman K Sivan.
- ⊙ NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) have selected Indian-American **Raja Chari** to be the Commander of the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station.



Presently, he is a colonel in the US Air Force.

- © The Union Minister of Earth Science **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** recently inaugurated a **Meteorological centre** in Union Territory of Ladakh located at the height of 3,500 metres.



The Meteorological centre will provide weather forecasts for the region and strengthen the early warning system of weather forecasting in the region. The centre will provide short-range weather forecasts (three days), medium range weather forecasts (twelve days) and long-range weather forecasts (one month).

- © The Serum Institute of India recently unveiled the first indigenously developed Pneumococcal Vaccine called **Pneumosil**. It was launched by the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India. Pneumosil was developed through collaboration with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH organization. The price of Pneumosil is highly inexpensive and will cost \$2 per dose. The Clinical trials of the vaccine was conducted in Gambia and India.

Sports

- © Indian cricket team skipper **Virat Kohli** scripted another record in the game. He broke Sachin Tendulkar's record and became the quickest batsman to complete 22,000 runs in One-day International cricket. Kohli breached the mark in the third ODI

against Australia in Canberra. He got to the milestone in his 242nd inning thus bettering the previous record set by Sachin Tendulkar, who got his 12000th run in his 300th inning.

- © **Lewis Hamilton** (Mercedes-Great Britain) has won the 2020 Bahrain Grand Prix at Bahrain International Circuit, Bahrain.



The race was the fifteenth round of the 2020 Formula One World Championship. This is the 11th victory for Hamilton of the season, and 95th F1 win of his career.

- © **Dawid Malan** of England has attained the highest-ever rating points for batsmen in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings.



The 33-year-old Malan has reached 915 points, and thus became the first player to cross the 900-point mark in the format.

- © **Corey Anderson**, all-rounder of New Zealand has announced his retirement from international cricket.



Anderson has played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs and 31 T20Is for New Zealand, scoring 2277 runs with two hundred and 10 half-centuries and 90 wickets.

- ⊙ **Jehan Daruvala** became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race at the 2020 Sakhir Grand Prix, Bahrain. This was the final race of the F2 season. The Formula 2 Championship is a second-tier single-seater racing championship.
- ⊙ Sri Lanka will host the **Asia Cup** in June 2021 while **Pakistan** has earned the rights to host the tournament in 2022. As per the original schedule, the tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan in 2020, however, it got postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ⊙ The Sports Ministry has formally recognized **Yogasana** as a competitive sport. This will enable the ancient practice to avail Government funding. This was done to spread awareness about Yoga and its benefits and help improve physical and mental wellbeing of the people. After its recognition as a competitive sport, Yogasana becomes eligible to enter several sports event. An International Yogasana Sports Federation was formed under the leadership of Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev. Yogasana is to be inducted with Khelo India Games Programme.

Persons in News

- ⊙ US President-elect, **Joe Biden** and Vice President-elect **Kamala Harris** have been jointly named **Person of the Year** by Time magazine 2020. It also released the annual list since 1927, to recognise a person or organisation who affected the news or impacted the country and world the most, for better or worse, during the calendar year.



Apart from this, Time magazine has named the Korean pop group BTS as its Entertainer of the Year, and basketball star LeBron James as Athlete of the Year. Zoom founder Eric Yuan was aptly

named Businessperson of The Year, as the video communications company has come to define the way millions have connected with each other during the pandemic.

- ⊙ Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** has appointed senior IAS officer **Utpal Kumar Singh** as Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and Lok Sabha Secretariat. His appointment will come into effect from December 1, 2020. He will succeed incumbent **Snehlata Shrivastava**.
- ⊙ The Government of India has appointed IAS officer **Varsha Joshi** as the new Chairperson of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- ⊙ Lt. General **Rajeev Chaudhary** has been appointed as the 27th Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO). His appointment is effective from December 1, 2020.
- ⊙ Srinagar born Wushu coach and the first Dronacharya Awardee from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, **Kuldeep Handoo** is appointed as the Ambassador of Fit India movement.
- ⊙ US-based Indian-origin health expert, **Anil Soni** has been appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the newly-created **The World Health Organization (WHO) Foundation**.
- ⊙ The International Golf Federation (IGF) elected **Annika Sorenstam** as its new president effective January 1, 2021. IGF President, **Peter Dawson**, is stepping down after 10 years of leadership and service. **Sorenstam**, a 72-time winner on the LPGA Tour and former No. 1 from Sweden.
- ⊙ **Zena Wooldridge** from England has been elected as the World Squash Federation President. She will become the 10th WSF President to serve since the Federation's inception in 1967.



She is the second female President after New Zealand's Susie Simcock. She replaces outgoing President Jacques Fontaine, from France. She previously served six years as President of the European Squash Federation between 2013-2019.



Plans and Policies

- ① **YS Jagan Mohan Reddy**, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh launched the **YSR free Crop Insurance Scheme**. Under the scheme, a sum of Rs. 1,252 crores has been credited into the bank accounts of 9.48 lacs farmers in the form of crop insurance. This scheme was one of the promises made by Jagan during his 3648 km long Yatra. Earlier, the farmer had to pay his share for availing Crop Insurance in the state. The new scheme does not demand the share from the farmer.
- ① A project worth \$400 million was signed between the Indian Government and the World Bank to protect India's poor and vulnerable population affected by the adverse economic crisis caused by the pandemic. The credit is from the International Development Association of the World Bank. This is the second operation in a two-tier programme. The first operation worth 750 million USD was approved in May this year. The programme envisages to strengthen government's capacity to provide coordinated social protection to the vulnerable from the pandemic-led economic shocks.
- ① The Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the **SEHAT Scheme** for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. It is Social Endeavour for Health and Telemedicine and will provide free cashless treatment for the inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir up to Rs. 5 lakhs of health cover in the form of a card. The Common Service Centres will be effectively used in the implementation of the scheme. This scheme will include all the Indoor Patient Department cases of **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** and also take the help of **Arogya Mitras** to cover maximum number of people. The Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation will provide the medical supplies for the hospitals under the scheme.
- ① The Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced to release Rs. 18,000 crores under **Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi**. Around nine crore farmers are to be benefitted from the funds. The main objective of the scheme is to increase the source of income of the farmers with the aim of supplement the financial needs and ensure crop health and appropriate yields.

Awards and Honours

- ① Indian athletes, **Bajrang Punia** (Freestyle-Wrestling) and **Elavenil Valarivan** (Shooting), bagged the top honours at the virtually held FICCI India Sports Awards 2020 on the back of the 10th Global Sports Summit. The two athletes, who have had an impressive 2019-20 season, won the Sportsperson of the Year awards

in their respective categories. The sports awards are an attempt by industry body, Federation of Indian Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to acknowledge and recognise the contribution of sportspersons and various stakeholders who deliver excellent results throughout the year.

The list of Winners in different Categories is given below.

Category	Winner
Sportsperson of the Year (Female)	Elavenil Valarivan
Sportsperson of the Year (Male)	Bajrang Punia
Best State Promoting Sports Award	Madhya Pradesh
Best Company Promoting Sports (Private Sector)	Anil Kumble

- ① The **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** has announced six laureates of the 2020 Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental honour. The champions of the Earth Award have been bestowed upon 6 individuals. The award recognizes outstanding environmental leaders from the public and private sectors, and from civil society for their pioneering initiatives aimed at healing the planet amid natural and man-made threats and whose activities have had a positive impact on the environment. The list of winners is given below.

Category	Champion	Reason
Policy Leadership	Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji	For his global climate action work and his commitment to climate-responsive national development.
Inspiration and Action	Yacouba Sawadogo (Burkina Faso)	For teaching farmers his traditional nature-based solution to regenerate their soil and turn barren land into arable land and forest across Africa.
Inspiration and Action	Nemonte Nenquimo (Ecuador)	For her leadership and unifying work with indigenous communities that halted drilling in Ecuador's Amazon rainforest.
Science and Innovation	Dr. Fabian Leendertz (Germany)	For his discoveries in zoonotic and his work in One Health.
Entrepreneur Vision	Mindy Lubber (USA)	For her commitment to turning capital markets green by mobilizing top investors and companies and making the business case for climate action and sustainability.
Lifetime Achievement Award	Professor Robert D. Bullard (USA)	For his commitment and service to environmental justice.



- © The winners of the prestigious **ICC Awards** of the Decade were announced on 28th December 2020. The ICC Awards of the Decade recognise the best players across Cricket over the past 10 years.

The list of winners is as follows.

Category	Winner
ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade	MS Dhoni (India)
Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade	Virat Kohli (India)
ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade	Virat Kohli (India)
ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Decade	Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)
ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade	Steve Smith (Australia)
ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Decade	Kyle Coetzer (Scotland)
Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade	Ellyse Perry (Australia)
ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Decade	Ellyse Perry (Australia)
ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Decade	Ellyse Perry (Australia)
ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade	Kathryn Bryce (Scotland)

