

J A N U A R Y 2 0 2 1

**MONTHLY UPDATES ON
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WILEY

National

- India's **72nd Republic Day** celebrated with a grand military parade and exhibition of its history, cultural diversity and strategic weaponry at the Rajpath, Delhi. The Republic Day Parade ceremony commenced with Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting the National War Memorial. The National Flag was unfurled followed by the National Anthem with a booming 21-gun salute. At Rajpath, in Delhi, magnificent parades by regiments of the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force, police, and paramilitary forces are witnessed. India's defensive prowess is on display too, with the latest missiles, aircraft, and weapon systems.
- The Ram Temple tableau of Uttar Pradesh that was on display during the Republic Day Parade 2021 has bagged the first prize among all tableaux.



The theme of Uttar Pradesh's tableau was **Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh**. The cultural heritage of ancient holy town Ayodhya, a replica of a Ram temple, a glimpse of Deepotsav and various stories from Ramayana epic were depicted in the tableau.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched **the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT** scheme. The main aim behind the scheme is to extend health insurance coverage to all residents of Jammu and Kashmir. In it, SEHAT stands for Social, Endeavour for Health and Telemedicine. It is a health insurance scheme for the Union Territory which provides free of cost insurance cover to all the residents of the UT of J&K. It also provides financial cover up to Rs. 5 Lakh per family on a floater basis to all residents of the UT of J&K and an operational

extension of PM-JAY to ₹15 lakh (approximately) additional families.

- Union Minister of Education, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has virtually laid the foundation stone of **TiHAN-IIT Hyderabad**, India's first Testbed for Autonomous Navigation Systems (Terrestrial and Aerial) at IIT Hyderabad. The Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation Systems (TiHAN) for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Remotely Operated Vehicles at IIT Hyderabad.
- The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has formally announced the final approval for **Oxford-AstraZeneca - Covishield and Bharat Biotech - Covaxin vaccines** against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) for emergency use.



The subject expert committee (SEC) under CDSCO had recommended Oxford-AstraZeneca's vaccine, which is being manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) as Covishield, for emergency use and Covaxin for restricted use. Covaxin is the indigenous vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

- The Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has bagged a contract worth ₹1390 crore for the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train** project. L&T has bagged the contract for the project from the National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL).
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for milling copra and ball copra. The government has increased the MSP of copra by ₹375 from 2020. Thus, the Copra would cost ₹10,335 per quintal and contributes in boosting the farmers' income.

- ⊙ The Ministry of road transport has decided to impose the additional taxes, known as **Green Tax** on old vehicles that are no more fit on road. The decision was taken to curb pollution and it will also motivate people to switch to environment-friendly alternatives to the vehicles.
- ⊙ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs recently chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved an ambitious scheme to boost the industrial development of Jammu and Kashmir. The Government of India has allocated ₹28,400 crores for the industrial development of Jammu and Kashmir scheme.
- ⊙ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 450- km **Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline** built at a cost of ₹3,000 crore via video conferencing. The event marks an important milestone towards the creation of One Nation One Gas Grid. The pipeline will carry natural gas from Kochi in Kerala through Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod districts to Mangaluru in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. It has been built by GAIL (India) Limited. It will carry natural gas from the LNG Regasification Terminal at Kochi. Natural gas pipeline network will be doubled in 5-6 years and CNG stations will be raised to 10,000 from the current count of 1,500.
- ⊙ Union Budget 2021, which is going to be presented on February 1, will be completely paperless in the wake of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This will be the first time since independence that the budget papers will not be printed. The Centre has received permission for the same from both houses of parliament. The decision has been taken as several people (approximately 100) would be required to stay at the printing press for around a fortnight which is not secure amid the COVID-19 fear.

ECONOMY

- ⊙ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the Economic Survey 2020-21 in the Lok Sabha on January 29, 2021. It was an estimation of the progress that the Indian economy has made in the last 12 months. It is the flagship annual document released by the Ministry of Finance. The document is presented in the parliament just before the Union Budget by the

Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. The document is prepared under the guidance of the Chief Economic Adviser of India. During the budget session, this document is presented to both the houses of the parliament and is non-binding in nature.

- As per the survey, the real growth rate for Financial Year 2021 was taken as -7.7% as per MoSPI while the real growth rate for Financial Year 2022 is assumed was taken as 11.5 % on the basis of estimates provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- The gross domestic product (GDP) was contracted by a record 23.9 per cent in April-June 2020 while it contracted by 7.5 percent in the second quarter.
- For the full fiscal, the survey projected a contraction of 7.7 per cent while a V-shaped recovery in the next. GDP growth will be expanding by 11 per cent in the 2021-22 fiscal.
- It highlighted that the Indian economy is technically in a recession as it has witnessed a contraction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the last two consecutive quarters.
- The Survey also provided a detailed analysis of India's V-shaped economic recovery after it was affected to the corona pandemic. It was mentioned that mega vaccination drive will support the V-shaped recovery.
- As per the survey, Agriculture sector has remained the silver lining in the growth trajectory even during the pandemic. However, contact-based services such as manufacturing and construction faced sharp decline.
- The Healthcare sector has taken centre stage in the economy where the government took part actively in shaping and structuring the healthcare market in the country.
- ⊙ The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, has launched the **Union Budget Mobile App** ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget on February 1, 2021.



The mobile app was launched for hassle-free access of Budget-related documents by Members of Parliament (MPs) and the public. The budget will completely be paperless for the first time.

- ⊙ Reserve Bank of India has launched a **Digital Payments Index (DPI)** to capture the extent of digitization of digital/electronic payments across the country. This RBI-Digital Payments Index (DPI) has 5 broad parameters that will be used for the measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments. These parameters are, Payment Enablers (weight 25%), Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%), Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%), Payment Performance (45%) and Consumer Centricity (5%). The base period for RBI-DPI is March 2018. This means that the DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100. RBI has calculated the DPI for March 2019 and March 2020 at 153.47 and 207.84 respectively, indicating appreciable growth.
- ⊙ The Reserve Bank of India has introduced **Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)** for all payment transactions of value ₹50 crore and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) via Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT). The Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) is a 20-digit number used to uniquely identify parties to financial transactions worldwide.
- ⊙ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the license of Maharashtra-based Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank, with immediate effect. Now, Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank Ltd. will not be allowed to conduct the business of banking, including acceptance of deposits and repayment of deposits, with effect from the close of business on January 11, 2021.
- ⊙ The Reserve Bank of India has imposed a penalty of ₹2 crore on Deutsche Bank AG for non-compliance with certain provisions of directions concerning interest rate on deposits. The central bank said the statutory inspection of Deutsche Bank's financial position as on March 31, 2019, and the Risk Assessment Report revealed non-compliance with the Reserve Bank of India (Interest Rate on Deposits) Directions, 2016.
- ⊙ **InstaFX** a new mobile application has been launched by ICICI Bank for authorised money changers to help customers of any bank get ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card swiftly. ICICI is the bank

is the first in the country to offer such facility to money changers. A money changer is a person or organization whose business is the exchange of coins or currency of one country, for that of another.

- ⊙ **Airtel Safe Pay**, a safe way to pay digitally, has been launched by the Airtel Payments Bank to protect Airtel customers from the growing incidents of online payment frauds. With this, Airtel customers will make UPI or net banking-based payments through Airtel Payments Bank, no longer have to worry about money flowing out of their accounts without their explicit consent.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- ⊙ Indian Space startup, **Skyroot Aerospace** has successfully test-fired a solid propulsion rocket engine, named Kalam-5. With this, it has become the first private company of India to successfully design, develop and test a full solid-fueled rocket stage. This crucial propulsion technology will be used for their maiden rocket Vikram-1, which is under active manufacturing and is targeted to be launched in December 2021 with the help of ISRO.
- ⊙ **Infosys** has recently announced that it has been accredited with the Google Cloud Partner Specialization in the data and analytics space. Infosys is among the top global system integrators which have been accredited with this specialization.
- ⊙ The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has announced the establishment of a **Quantum Computing Applications Lab** in partnership with **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**. The move will give select researchers, scientists access to Amazon's Bracket cloud-based quantum computing service.
- ⊙ Tech major **Microsoft** has launched its new **India Development Center (IDC)** facility in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The new centre will serve as a leading hub for driving advanced engineering and innovation. The centre will build on Microsoft's commitment to tap India's world-class engineering talent and create solutions for a global impact.



- ⊙ ISRO chairman K Sivan is likely to inaugurate the **Sri Shakthi Satellite Ground Station** at Sri Shakthi Institute of Engineering and Technology in Coimbatore. The station will help monitor the satellite developed by the institute, which is set to be launched by the ISRO. A satellite communication lab was established in the college in 2010.
- ⊙ **Bharti Airtel** took an edge by becoming the first telecom operator in India to demonstrate 5G services successfully. Bharti Airtel announced that it orchestrated live fifth-generation (5G) service over a commercial network in Hyderabad.
- ⊙ Goa's 14-year-old **Leon Mendonca** has become India's 67th chess Grandmaster by winning the third and final norm at a tournament in Italy.
- ⊙ **Khelo India Ice Hockey Tournament** organised at Chiktan in Kàrgil, Ladakh. For the first time, the women team of Chiktan also participated in the Khelo India Games in Kargil district. There are 13 teams from different villages of Chiktan participating in the tournament, which include 11 men's teams and 2 women's teams.

PERSONS IN NEWS

SPORTS

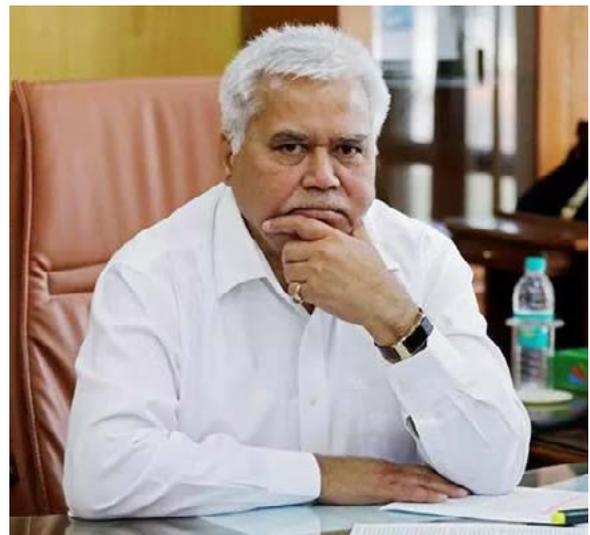
- ⊙ With the assembly elections are to be held in Tamil Nadu in 2021, **Jallikattu**, a traditional bull-taming sport of the state has caught the attention of the political parties in the country.



The Congress leader Rahul Gandhi recently attended the Jallikattu event. In 2011, the central government added bulls to the list of animals whose training and exhibition were prohibited. Later in 2014, the Supreme Court banned Jallikattu sport. Currently, the state government of Tamil Nadu has legalised Jallikattu events. In 2018, the Supreme court referred the case of Jallikattu to a constitutional bench which is still pending.

- ⊙ The **Badminton World Federation (BWF)** has imposed a 5-year ban on Russian shuttler **Nikita Khakimov** for charges of —betting, wagering and irregular match results. Khakimov was part of the Russian men's team that won the bronze medal at the 2020 European Team Championships.

- ⊙ Recently, **R. S. Sharma** has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Ayushman Bharat scheme or the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana which is an insurance scheme by the National Health Authority's (NHA). He will replace **Indu Bhushan**.

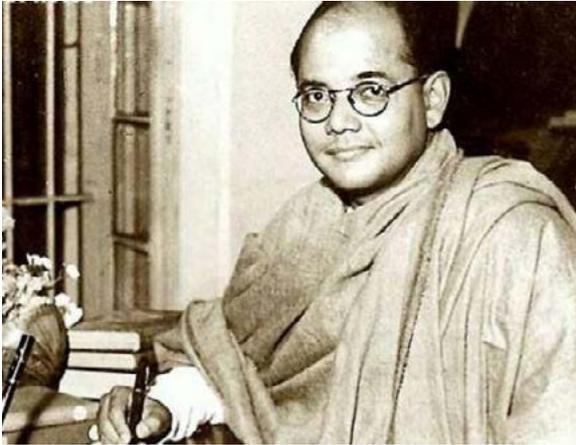


- ⊙ **Bhawana Kanth** became the first woman fighter pilot to take part in the Republic Day parade. She was one among the first women fighter Pilots inducted in Indian Air Force in 2016.



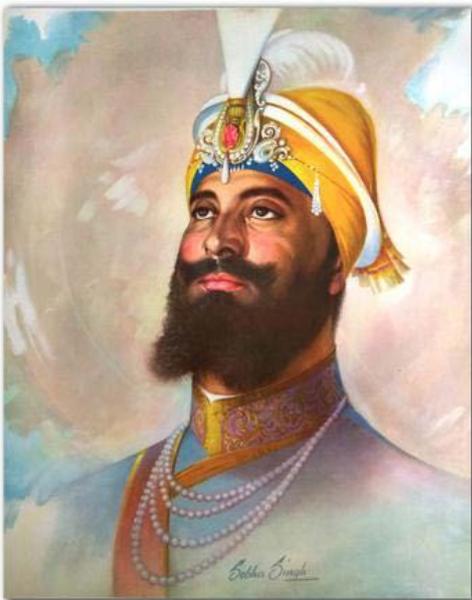
The other fighter pilots inducted into the Indian Air Force were Avani Chaturvedi and Mohana Singh.

- ⊙ The birth anniversary of **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose**, on January 23, has been announced as **Parakram Diwas** by the Ministry of Culture.



The day is celebrated to honour and remember Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation. Earlier this month, the Ministry of Culture held a high-level committee, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a befitting manner.

- ⊙ India celebrated **Guru Gobind Singh** Jayanti on January 20, 2021. Guru Gobind Singh was the last of the ten Sikh Gurus.



He was born on December 22, 1666 in Patna. His birthday is celebrated according to the Nanakshahi calendar.

- ⊙ The **US-India Business Council (USIBC)** has selected three top corporate leaders as the Vice-Chairs of 2021 Global Board of Directors of USIBC with immediate effect. The three new appointees will now work with USIBC President **Nisha Biswal** and the Council's policy directors, for strengthening US-India commercial relationship for the future. The three newly appointed VCs are, Biocon Executive Chairperson: Kiran Mazumdar- Shaw, Amway CEO: Milind Pant, Vice-chair at Nasdaq: Edward Knight.

PLANS AND POLICIES

- ⊙ The Government of India launched the third phase of **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana** on 15 January 2021. The scheme has been rolled out for the current financial year, ending March 2021, and will be implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The training will be imparted through 729 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs), empanelled non-PMKK training centres and more than 200 industrial training institutes (ITIs). Further, a five-year PMKVY will be launched in 2021- 22 with an enhanced target of skilling 1.5 crore youth.
- ⊙ The Health and Family Welfare Ministry has recently formed a technical expert group to study the adverse findings from the **National Family Health Survey-5**. The Ministry has set up the technical committee of medicine and nutrition experts under the leadership of Joint Secretary Preeti Pant.
- ⊙ The Union government has appointed **RS Sharma**, former Trai chief, as the chairperson of an empowered committee for the administration of Covid-19 vaccine. A ten-member team has been constituted to be headed by Sharma. This has come days ahead of the mega vaccination drive is to start in India. He has also been included as a member of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19 that was formed in August 2020.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

- ⊙ Senior scientist **Hemant Kumar Pandey** has been honoured with DRDO's Scientist of the Year Award for his contribution in developing several

herbal medicines, including the popular drug Lukoskin meant for the treatment of leucoderma.

- ⊙ The chairman & CEO of Railway Board, **Vinod Kumar Yadav** has been conferred with the prestigious —**Eminent Engineer Award** for the Year 2020'. This award is given by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) for his outstanding contribution towards modernization and reforms over Indian Railways.
- ⊙ The Ministry of Home Affairs has announced a list of 119 personalities who will be conferred the **Padma Awards** by President Ram Nath Kovind this year. These awards cater to various disciplines including art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service. While 'Padma Shri' is awarded for distinguished service in any field, 'Padma Bhushan' is awarded for distinguished service of a high order.

Award	Awardee
Padma Vibhushan	Shinzo Abe, Japan
Padma Vibhushan	S P Balasubramaniam (Posthumous), Tamil Nadu
Padma Vibhushan	Belle Monappa Hegde, Karnataka

Award	Awardee
Padma Vibhushan	Narinder Singh Kapany (Posthumous), USA
Padma Vibhushan	Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Delhi
Padma Vibhushan	B. B. Lal, Delhi
Padma Vibhushan	Sudarshan Sahoo, Odisha
Padma Bhushan	Krishnan Nair Shantakumari Chithra, Kerala
Padma Bhushan	Tarun Gogoi (Posthumous), Assam
Padma Bhushan	Chandrashekhar Kambara, Karnataka
Padma Bhushan	Sumitra Mahajan, Madhya Pradesh
Padma Bhushan	Nripendra Misra, Uttar Pradesh
Padma Bhushan	Ram Vilas Paswan (Posthumous), Bihar
Padma Bhushan	Keshubhai Patel (Posthumous), Gujarat
Padma Bhushan	Kalbe Sadiq (Posthumous), Uttar Pradesh
Padma Bhushan	Rajnikant Devidas Shroff, Maharashtra
Padma Bhushan	Tarlochan Singh, Haryana

