Daily News Decode

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Flash Flood Guidance Services launched

- The first of its kind for South Asian countries namely India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka

- Meteorological observational network in the country augmented

- 102 new District Agro-Meteorological Field Units established in 2020 in addition to 130 Agromet Field Units

- Accurate and timely prediction of the tropical cyclones Amphan, Nisarga and Nivar by the India Meteorological Department (IMD)

- Certificate of recognition and certificate of appreciation received for 'tsunami ready' by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)-UNESCO; certification is a first-of-its-kind in the Indian Ocean region.

- A very high-resolution (400 m) operational air quality prediction system developed to predict extreme air pollution events in Delhi and issue timely warnings to take necessary steps

- A new open access book published on Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region in June 2020

DRDO today observed the 63rd Foundation Day of its establishment.

- DRDO Celebrates Foundation Day

- DRDO was established in 1958 with just 10 laboratories to enhance the research work in Defence sector and was tasked with designing and developing cutting edge defence technologies for Indian Armed Forces.

- Today, DRDO is working in multiple cutting edge military technology areas, which include aeronautics, armaments, combat vehicles, electronics, instrumentation, engineering systems, missiles, materials, naval systems, advanced computing, simulation, cyber, life sciences and other technologies for defence.

Australia changes word in national anthem to honour indigenous people

- On new year eve, Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect "the spirit of unity" and the country's Indigenous population.

- Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison announced that the second line of the anthem, Advance Australia Fair, has been changed from For we are young and free to For we are one and free

India and ADB sign USD 231 million loan to augment electricity generation capacity in Assam

- India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a USD 231 million loan to augment electricity generation capacity in the State of Assam through construction of a 120 Mega Watts hydroelectric power plant that will enhance availability of electricity for households.

- This is the third tranche loan for the ongoing Assam Power Sector Investment Programme that was approved by the ADB Board in July 2014.
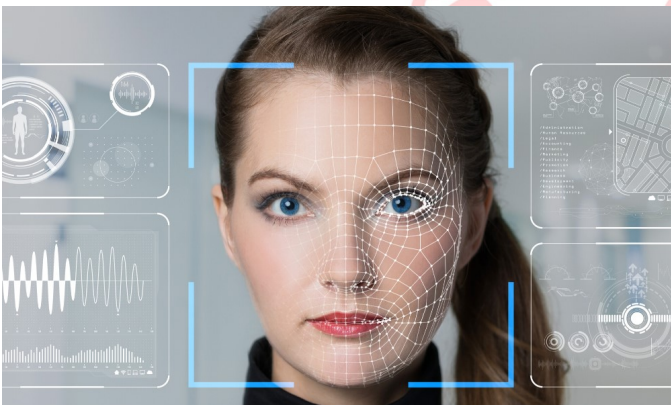
SAHAYAK-NG

- Maiden Flight Trial of SAHAYAK-NG, Air Droppable Container

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) along with Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of 'SAHAYAK-NG'

- It was dropped from IL 38SD aircraft (Indian Navy) off the coast of Goa.

- It is India's first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container

- SAHAYAK-NG is an advanced version of SAHAYAK Mk I.

- The newly developed GPS aided air dropped container is having the capability to carry a payload that weighs upto 50 kg and can be dropped from heavy aircraft.

- The trial was conducted by Indian Navy to enhance its operational logistics capabilities and provide critical engineering stores to ships which are deployed more than 2000 km from the coast.

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- It reduces the requirement of ships to come close to the coast to collect spares and store

- Two DRDO laboratories i.e. NSTL, Visakhapatnam and ADRDE, Agra were involved in the development of SAHAYAK-NG container along the industry partner M/s Avantel for GPS integration

- The Naval Science and Technological Laboratory is an Indian defence laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation, located in Visakhapatnam.

- Its main function is the research and development of underwater weapons and associated systems. NSTL is organized under DRDO's Directorate of Naval R&D

- ADRDE is a pioneer R&D lab of DRDO for the Design and Development of Aerodynamic Decelerators, Aerostat Systems.

- The charter of duties of the establishment includes development of Paratrooper Parachute Systems, Aircrew Parachute System, Ammunition Parachute System , Brake Parachute, Recovery Parachute System, Aerial Delivery Parachute Systems, Heavy Drop Systems, Inflatable Systems, Airship Technologies and Aircraft Arrester Barrier System etc.

Facial Recognition Technology

- According to experts, Rapid deployment of facial recognition system by the government without any law in place poses a huge threat to privacy rights and freedom of speech and expression

- It is a technology capable of matching a human face from a digital image or a video frame against a database of faces, typically employed to authenticate users through ID verification services, works by pinpointing and measuring facial features from a given image.

- Automated facial recognition was pioneered in the 1960s

- As of now there are currently 16 different facial recognition tracking (FRT) systems in active utilisation by various Central and State governments across India for surveillance, security or authentication of identity

- There are no specific laws or guidelines to regulate the use of this potentially invasive technology

The Dry run

- The Dry run is meant to test the linkages between planning and implementation and to identify the challenges, the Centre had said Thursday.

- The drill was conducted in four states Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat—on December 28 and 29.

Kerala govt announces digital media literacy programme

- The Kerala Government announced a digital media literacy programme called 'Satyameva Jayate' (Truth alone triumphs).

- The programme would be taught at schools and colleges, which would been couraged to develop curriculum on digital media literacy

- The Satyameva Jayate programme would cover five points -- what is wrong information; why they are spreading fast; what precautions have to be adopted while using the content of social media; how those who spread fake news make profit; and what steps can be initiated by citizens.

UK abolishes 'sexist' sales tax on women's sanitary products
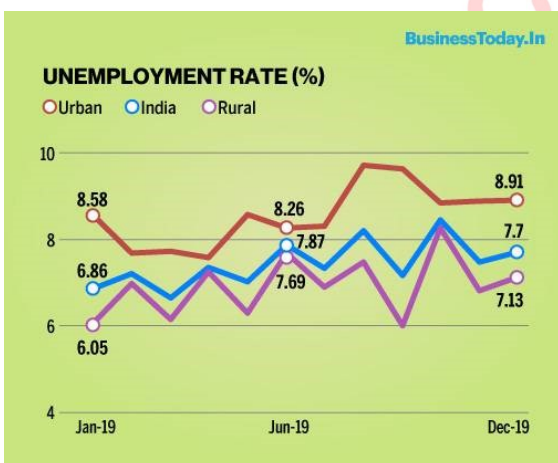
- BRITAIN ABOLISHED the socalled "tampon tax" on Friday, eliminating sales taxes on women's sanitary products.

- The move was widely praised by women's rights campaigners as well as proponents of the country's departure from the European Union

- EU law had prevented member states from reducing the rate of value-added tax below 5%, meaning the period products were treated as luxury items and not essentials.

RBI launches Digital Payments Index

- The RBI has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI)to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country

- The RBI-DPI has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period—DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100

- The RBI-DPI comprises 5 broad parameters that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods

- These parameters are: payment enablers (weight25percent),payment infrastructure – demand - side factors (10percent),payment infrastructure–supply-side factors (15 percent), payment performance (45 percent) and consumer centricity (5percent)

- Each of these parameters have sub-parameters which, in turn, consist of various measurable indicators

Increase in the Urban jobless rate

- As per quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Unemployment rate in urban areas rose to 9.1 per cent in January-March 2020 from 7.9 per cent in October-December 2019

- According to quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), unemployment rate in urban areas rose to 9.1 per cent in January-March 2020 from 7.9 per cent in October-December 2019 but marginally lower than 9.3 per cent in January-March 2019,

- Urban unemployment was recorded at 8.4 per cent in July-September 2019, 8.9 per cent in April-June 2019 and 9.9 per cent in October-December 2018.

- The survey finds that urban unemployment in the age group 15-29 years was 21.1 per cent in January-March, up from 19.2 per cent in October-December.

- It also states that female unemployment rate was recorded in double digits at 10.5 per cent in January-March, up from 9.8 per cent in the previous quarter.

- For urban males, it was at 8.7 per cent in January-March as against 7.3 per cent in the previous quarter.

- As per the PLFS, labour force participation rate rose to over a five-quarter high of 37.5 per cent, as against 37.2 per cent in the previous quarter.

- Unemployment data for urban areas is released quarterly based on current weekly status.

- This dataset differs from the Annual Report of Periodic Labour Force Survey, which covers both rural and urban areas and gives estimates of employment and unemployment in both usual status (ps+ss) and CWS.

Bhima-Koregaon battle

- The people of Dalit communities gather in Bhima Koregaon in large numbers on 1 January every year to pay tribute to the Dalit heroes who died in the war between the British and the Peshwas on 1 January 1818. The Peshwas were defeated in this battle of Bhima Koregaon.

- The Battle took place when the forces of Maratha ruler Peshwa Baji Rao II fought with those of the British East India Company in which the majority of soldiers belong to Mahar at Bhima Koregaon, named so for being situated on the bank of River Bhima.

- Mahar relates this battle to their self-respect because they were insulted by the Peshwa Baji Rao II on their identity and caste when they offered their services to the Peshwa.

- The Mahars then took the job with the British and fought the war on their behalf.

- The soldiers of the Peshwa defeated and it was the first historic step towards making India free of caste and democracy "which happened almost two hundred years ago.

- This battle ended the Peshwa System and the British got the power of this country of India.

Sinking land may affect 635 million people worldwide by 2040: Study

- The gradual sinking of land could affect 635 million people globally by 2040, according to new research funded by UNESCO.

- During the past century, land subsidence due to groundwater depletion occurred at 200 locations in 34 countries.

- Researchers said most of the 635 million inhabitants in subsistence-susceptible areas are located in Asia, with a total exposed GDP of $9.78 trillion.

AQI in Mumbai drops to 'very poor' category for first time in 2020

- <u>For the first time in 2020, air quality in and around Mumbai deteriorated from 'poor' to 'very poor' category on Thursday, according to SAFAR.</u>

- The overall AQI was recorded at 307. "AQI in Mumbai will continue to remain in the poor category due to...inflow of continental air with low ventilation and slow dispersion of accumulated pollution," SAFAR spokes person said.

153-yr-old Patna Met Centre gets centennial observing station status

- <u>The WMO has awarded the status of 'centennial observing station' to the Patna meteorological observatory.</u>

- "With this recognition, Patna has joined a niche club of cities having a long-term record of scientific observation in the field of meteorology, climatology and applied science," Centre's Director Vivek Sinha said. Patna meteorological observatory was established in 1867.

UK, Spain reach agreement to keep Gibraltar in Schengen Area

- <u>The UK and Spain have reached a preliminary agreement to keep Gibraltar, a British Overseas Territory, a part of European Union agreements such as the Schengen Area.</u>

- "With this (agreement), the fence is removed," Spanish Foreign Minister Gonzalez Laya said. All the details of the agreement will be settled between two countries during a six-month transition regarding Gibraltar, she added.

- Gibraltar, a British Overseas Territory, located at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula, is the subject of an irredentist territorial claim by Spain.

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- <u>In 2000, a political declaration of unity was signed by the members of the Gibraltar Parliament; according to the Gibraltar government, "In essence the declaration stated that the people of Gibraltar will never compromise, give up or trade their sovereignty or their right to self-determination; that Gibraltar wants good, neighbourly, European relations with Spain; and that Gibraltar belongs to the people of Gibraltar and is neither Spain's to claim or Britain's to give away."</u>

- Spain insists on a bilateral agreement with the UK over sovereignty, whereas the UK will only discuss sovereignty if Gibraltar is included in the discussions.

- The United Nations understanding of the positions of each party is set out in their 2016 report. The UN currently lists Gibraltar as a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

An ill-conceived, overbroad and vague ordinance (Written by Justice (retd.) Madan B. Lokur)

- Article 213 (1) of the Constitution of India provides: "If at any time, except when the Legislative Assembly of a State is in session, or where there is a Legislative Council in a State, except when both Houses of the Legislature are in session, the Governor is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action, he may promulgate such Ordinances as the circumstances appear to him to require: …"

- There is no established practice requiring the Governor (or the President under Article 123 of the Constitution) to state the circumstances for immediate action.

- But the Supreme Court of India has held that the existence of circumstances leading to the satisfaction of the Governor can be inquired into.

- In other words, the court can inquire whether circumstances existed that enabled the Governor to be satisfied of the necessity of promulgating an ordinance.

Clear connection

- The end of the Interconnection Usage Charges (IUC) regime on January 1, under which one telecom operator paid a charge to another on whose network a subscriber's voice call was completed, creates a new era in which these companies can focus on upgrading their networks and service.

- One operator, Jio, had a higher proportion of outgoing calls to other wireless operators since its launch a few years ago, thus having to pay significant net interconnection charges, which was six paise per minute since 2017.

- That imbalance has reduced, and TRAI has now introduced an arrangement called bill and keep, which does away with the IUC.

- For TRAI, which has stressed the importance of consumer welfare through adequate choice, affordable tariff and quality service, it is important to tread cautiously on claims made on behalf of the sector, that higher tariffs alone can ensure the health of telecoms. India is a mass market for voice and data services that fuel the digital economy

- On the consumer side, helping more people migrate to 4G services quickly through affordable handsets will help telcos put their infrastructure to better use.

GST collection at record-high of Rs 1.15 lakh cr in Dec'20

- GST collections surged to an all-time high of over Rs 1.15 lakh crore in December as economic activities picked up after lifting of stringent lockdown restrictions.

- Mop-up from the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which is levied when a consumable item is sold or a service such as travel booking rendered, in December was 12 per cent higher than such receipts in the same month of 2019.

- The increase in tax collections was due to the "combined effect of the rapid economic recovery post-pandemic and the nationwide drive against GST evaders and fake bills along with many systemic changes introduced recently, which have led to improved compliance," the statement said.