

Daily News Decode

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National Youth Day



- The Nation is celebrating birth anniversary of youth Icon Swami Vivekananda today.
- One of the greatest spiritual leaders of India, Swami Vivekananda introduced the world to the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga.
- He became popular in the western world after his famous speech at the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.
- Vivekananda was the chief disciple of the 19th-century mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He was the founder of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.
- Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary is also celebrated as National Youth Day in the country.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister released Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of 146 National Park and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country.



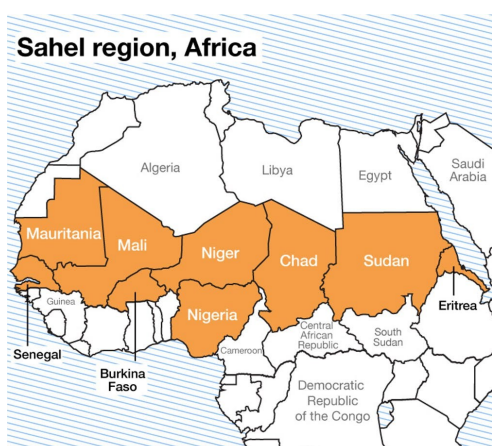
- At present, India has a network of 903 Protected Areas in the country covering about five per cent of the total geographic area of the country.
- In order to assess the efficacy of Protected Areas, evaluation of management effectiveness is required.
- 70 per cent of the global tiger population, 70 per cent of Asiatic lions and more than 60 per cent of leopard's population in India is a certificate of India's thriving biodiversity.
- The Minister also announced that from this year onwards ten best National Parks, five Coastal and Marine parks and top five Zoos in the country will be ranked and awarded every year.
- He also launched the Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Indian Zoos framework which proposes guidelines, criteria and indicators for evaluation of zoos of the country.

India at UNSC expresses serious concern over security situation in Sahel & Lake Chad region in West Africa



- India has expressed serious concern over the security situation in the Sahel and Lake Chad region in West Africa, saying that terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime have continued unabated in the area.
- India lauded the positive developments and leadership of the countries of West Africa and Sahel for their commitment to sustainable peace and development, and safeguard fundamental rights.

The Sahel



- The Sahel is the ecoclimatic and biogeographic realm of transition in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian savanna to the south.
- Having a semi-arid climate, it stretches across the south-central latitudes of Northern Africa between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea.
- Historically, the western part of the Sahel was sometimes known as the Sudan region. This belt was roughly located between the Sahara and the coastal areas of West Africa.
- Terrorist organizations including Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating in the Sahel have contributed to the violence, extremism and instability of the region

Lake Chad



- Lake Chad is a historically large, shallow, endorheic lake in central Africa, which has varied in size over the centuries.
- The freshwater lake is located in the Sahelian zone of West-central Africa. It is located in the interior basin which used to be occupied by a much larger ancient sea sometimes called Mega Chad.
- The lake is historically ranked as one of the largest lakes in Africa. Its surface area varies by season as well as from year to year. Lake Chad is mainly in the far west of Chad, bordering on northeastern Nigeria.
- The lake is home to more than 44 species of algae. In particular it is one of the world's major producers of wild spirulina.

ISRO to adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Labs across country to promote education



- Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO will adopt one hundred Atal Tinkering Labs across the country to promote education in the field of Space Education and Space Technology related innovations for school students
- This is a great opportunity for the young budding space researchers and astronauts to learn from the best minds of the country and become living inspirations for their school, families and local communities.
- An Atal Tinkering Lab provides a makerspace where young minds can give shape to their ideas through hands on do-it-yourself mode and learn innovation skills.
- To foster entrepreneurship and innovation, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog has established over seven thousand Atal Tinkering Labs across the country.

National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)



- There are 126 subject fields for graduate / diploma students for which training is provided.
- National Scheme for providing skill training to Fresh Graduates, Diploma Holders in Engineering and Technology and +2 Vocational pass outs.
- National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) is instituted by the Board of Apprenticeship Training/ Practical Training, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.
- It is a 1 year programme equipping technically qualified youth with practical knowledge and skills required in their field of work.
- During the period of Apprenticeship, the apprentices are paid a stipend amount, 50% of which is reimbursable to the employer from the Government of India.
- At the end of the training period, the Apprentices are issued a Certificate of Proficiency by the Government of India which can be registered at all employment exchanges across India as valid employment experience.
- The apprentices are placed for training at Central, State and Private organizations which have excellent training facilities.
- The applicant must be pursuing a higher educational degree or diploma in a technological field.
- Minimum age for the apprenticeship is 16 years.
- Applicants should not be a beneficiary of any other skill development program of the government.

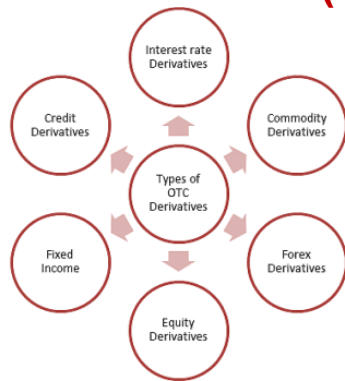
- The applicant should not be a self employed person. Also he/she should not be involved in a business or profession that yields them a taxable income.
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme should not be active in any government service.
- The applicant should not be an existing professional in any field.

Tapas BH 201 and SWIFT UAV



- Recently, the handing over ceremony of Retractable Landing Gear system for Tapas, 18 types of filters for P-75 Submarine and SWIFT drones held at DRDO lab in Chennai
- TAPAS-BH is a medium altitude long endurance (MALE) UAV with an operating altitude of 30000 ft, endurance of 24 hrs and a range of 250 kms.
- It is a long endurance unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) which used to be previously referred as Rustom-II, being developed by India on the lines of the American Predator drones
- After its first flight in 2016, it was renamed from Rustom-II to TAPAS-BH-201 TAPAS-BH-201 had a successful maiden flight on 16 November 2016 at Challakere, 200 km away from Bengaluru in the district of Chitradurga in south Indian state of Karnataka.
- It can carry a variety of payloads up to a maximum of 350 kgs. Rustom-2 is a platform designed to perform Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance missions for Indian Armed Forces.
- Its mission requirements are to provide continuous wide area coverage and yet be able to identify small targets.
- Rustom-II is comparable in the same class as IAI's HERON.
- A technology demonstrator called Stealth Wing Flying Testbed (SWiFT) is being developed by the Aeronautical Development Agency and Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur.
- It is intended to develop the technologies required in the final Ghatak UCAV.
- A prototype of the SWIFT is expected to be flight-tested by 2021 with a NPO Saturn 36MT turbofan engine.

Over The Counter (OTC) Derivative



- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the draft Market-makers in OTC Derivatives Directions, 2020 for public comments.
- OTC Derivatives are the contracts that are traded directly between the buyer and seller without any intermediate exchange. Stocks that trade through OTC are usually smaller companies that cannot meet the listing requirements of the exchange.
- An over the counter (OTC) derivative is a financial contract that is arranged between two counterparties but with minimal intermediation or regulation.
- OTC derivatives do not have standardized terms and they are not listed on an asset exchange.
- As an example, a forward and a futures contract both can represent the same underlying, but the former is OTC while the latter is exchange-traded.
- Over the counter derivatives are instead private contracts that are negotiated between counterparties without going through an exchange or other type of formal intermediaries, although a broker may help arrange the trade.
- Therefore, over the counter derivatives could be negotiated and customized to suit the exact risk and return needed by each party. Although this type of derivative offers flexibility, it poses credit risk because there is no clearing corporation.
- Examples of OTC derivatives include forwards, swaps, and exotic options, among others.

Sagar Anveshika': New Coastal Research Vessel For Nation



- Sagar Anveshika' is a coastal research vessel for strengthening scientific research about various issues inside the ocean
- Anveshika has been built under the Indian Register of Shipping (IRClass) and is a DP (Dynamic Positioning)-Capable vessel.
- Anveshika will add to the capacity and capability for exploring the ocean which is a huge source of water, energy, food, minerals.
- Utilizing the Research Vehicle, Marine Scientists can travel six kilometres below the sea.
- The scientists can also stay underwater for more than 16 hours to conduct research activities.
- Anveshika will enable scientists to conduct various oceanographic research missions aboard, it houses modern laboratories equipped with the latest instruments.

NDRF To Get UN Tag Of International Disaster Response Force



- India could soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country's federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardisation later this year

- The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.
- The National Disaster Response Force was raised in 2006 to undertake specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and manmade disasters or life threatening situations. It has 12 operational battalions comprising more than 15,000 personnel based across the country at present while four more battalions are taking shape.

'Sea Vigil-21'



- The Indian Navy will kick-start a two-day mega defence exercise on Tuesday covering the country's 7516 km coastline and exclusive economic zone, officials said.
- Billed as India's largest coastal defence exercise, it will involve all the 13 coastal states and Union Territories along with other maritime stakeholders, they said.
- "The second edition of the biennial pan-India coastal defence exercise 'Sea Vigil-21' will be conducted on January 12-13," the Navy said.
- The exercise is a build-up towards the major theatre level exercise TROPEX which Indian Navy conducts every two years
- TROPEX, a month-long exercise, stands for Theatre-Level Readiness and Operational Exercise, and is carried out by the Indian Navy every two years.
- In the intervening period, the Western Naval Command and the Eastern Naval Command hold their individual exercises.
- TROPEX assesses the operational preparedness of the Navy. The last TROPEX was carried out in the first two months of 2019, involving around 60 Naval ships along with 12 Coast Guard vessels and 60 planes.
- Besides the Navy, units from the Army, IAF and Coast Guard take part in the exercise to bolster interoperability.

- TROPEX typically includes three phases – the independent workup phase, the joint workup phase, and the tactical phase. In the last one, an actual war-like situation is simulated.
- All the capabilities of the Navy are tested to see if they meet the objectives as laid down before the exercise commences.

Source: Economic Times

Expenditure Budget



- Government looks at 'expenditure' budget to aid higher growth
- Expenditure Budget shows the revenue and capital disbursements of various ministries/ departments and presents the estimates in respect of each under 'Plan' and 'Non-Plan'.
- It gives a detailed analysis of various types of expenditure and broad reasons for the variations in estimates.
- Demand for grants of the Central government is also a part of the Expenditure Budget.

Usually, the government prepares its expenditure-related information in three separate documents:

- ⇒ Expenditure profile
- ⇒ Expenditure budget
- ⇒ Demand for grants

These are presented under the expenditure budget.

Expenditure profile contains budgetary trends on important policy issues such as:

- ⇒ Gender Budget
- ⇒ Welfare of women and children
- ⇒ Resource allocation for the North-Eastern states
- ⇒ Welfare of SC/STs

It also contains consolidated information about government schemes such as:

- ⇒ Central sector schemes and Centrally sponsored schemes
- ⇒ Subsidies
- ⇒ Investment in PSUs
- ⇒ Resources of PSUs
- After the merger of the Railways Budget with the Union Budget in 2017-18, the information in the Expenditure Profile also contains a detailed analysis of the Ministry of Railways.

Annual Budget To Go Paperless For The First Time Since Independence



- The Annual Budget, scheduled to be presented in the parliament by Finance Minister Nirmal Sitaraman on February 1, will be a paperless affair for the year 2021-22
- The reports suggest that the new initiative was lauded in the parliament and has received the accent from both the houses.
- If the same happens, it would be the first time in the history of the Indian parliament that the budget would be presented in the absence of printed copies on the tables.
- The reason drawn by the parliament to go paperless has been taken as the printing process would require several people to stay at the press for around a fortnight amid the coronavirus fears.
- The budget is kept confidential with access to only a limited few until its presentation in the parliament. The budget documents are generally printed at the Finance Ministry's in-house printing press in the North Block.
- The reports also suggest that in 2021, the Halwa Ceremony, which marks the process of printing documents for the Budget, might also not happen. The ceremony is attended by some ministers and the printing staff.
- Once printing starts, printing staffers have to stay inside the press till the presentation of the budget.
- Only a few high-ranked officials are allowed access and that too on the basis of a special identity card. The entire facility, loading-unloading and transportation are manned by the special security forces.

Sultanpur National Park



- Sultanpur National Park (formerly Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary) is located at Sultanpur village on Gurugram-Jhajjar highway, 15 km from Gurugram, Haryana and 50 km from Delhi in India. This covers approximately 142.52 hectares.
- Sultanpur was the center of salt production for use in Delhi and the United Provinces till the late 19th century.
- Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary is home for several colorful winged migratory species, located at Gurgaon district of Haryana.
- Its small area comprising with shallow freshwater Sultanpur Lake, where 100 of migratory bird species visit to feed every year.
- The Sultanpur National Park also known for its rich variety of wild animals and flying predators along with beautiful birds.

Tirthan sanctuary, Great Himalayan National Park best performers among protected areas



- The Tirthan Valley is the gateway to the spectacular, World Heritage-listed Great Himalayan National Park, 754 pristine square kilometres of steep-sided river valleys and mountains reaching right up to the 6000m-plus peaks of the Great Himalayan Range
- A part of the Tirthan Wildlife sanctuary also is a World Heritage Site. This national park is home to the snow leopard & rare pheasants like the Western Tragopan.
- The Tirthan Wildlife Sanctuary. Located at a height of 5000 feet and overlooking River Tirthan, this beautiful wildlife sanctuary is one of the most amazing places of Himachal Pradesh.
- This sanctuary is connected to the famous national park of this area, the Great Himalayan National Park.
- **The Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP)**, is one of India's national parks, is located in Kullu region in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
- The park was established in 1984 and is spread over an area of 1171 km² at an altitude of between 1500 and 6000 m.
- The Great Himalayan National Park is a habitat to numerous flora and more than 375 fauna species, including approximately 31 mammals, 181 birds, 3 reptiles, 9 amphibians, 11 annelids, 17 mollusks and 127 insects.
- They are protected under the strict guidelines of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972; hence any sort of hunting is not permitted.
- In June 2014, the Great Himalayan National Park was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.
- The GHNP is at the junction of world's two major biogeographic realms: the Indomalayan realm to the south and the Palearctic realm to the north

Reframing India's foreign policy priorities (Written by M.K. Narayanan)

- Europe has turned its back on the U.S. and revived its China links, by 'concluding in principle the negotiations for an EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment'.
- China is about the only major country which had a positive rate of growth at the end of 2020, and its economy is poised to grow even faster in 2021.
- Militarily, China has further strengthened itself, and now seeks to dominate the Indo-Pacific Ocean with its announcement of the launch of its third aircraft carrier in 2021.

- Simultaneously, it is seeking to strengthen its military coordination with Russia.
- Russia is beginning to display greater interest in the affairs of countries on its periphery and, together with strengthening ties with China and reaching an entente with Turkey, this seems to signal reduced interest in countries such as India.
- In West Asia, the Abraham Accords, leading to a realignment of forces in the Arab world, have sharpened the division between the Saudi Bloc and Iran-Turkey.
- Given the strategic flux in the region, Iran could well be tempted to use its nuclear capability to enhance its position, confident that the West may be unwilling to challenge it at this juncture.
- Confrontation between Indian and Chinese armed forces is expected to continue.
- India currently plays no significant role in West Asia. India-Iran relations today lack warmth.
- In Afghanistan, India has been marginalised as far as the peace process is concerned.
- There is again a perception that India's closeness to the U.S. has resulted in the weakening of its links with traditional friends such as Russia and Iran, impacting the country's image.
- Perhaps the most relevant explanation could be the shifting balance of power in the region in which India is situated, notably the rise of China, and the enlarging conflict between the two biggest powers in Asia
- India remains isolated from two important supranational bodies of which it used to be a founding member, viz., the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- Efforts to whip up enthusiasm for newer institutions such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), have hardly been successful.
- India has opted out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (a majority of Asian countries are members), and failed to take advantage of the RIC, or the Russia

Dialogues for democracy, lessons from Rajasthan (Written by Sakina Dhorajiwala & Purna Chandra Kishan)

- Very often, policy makers ignore the need for dialogue and deliberation with beneficiaries.
- Consultations are needed during the initial stages of law making of a government programme as much as a continuous dialogic exercise must be the norm for effective programme implementation.
- an example of the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Rajasthan.

- Rajasthan has a healthy tradition of consulting with worker groups and civil society organisations not only in the initial stage of policy formulation but also to take continuous feedback from the field and carry out periodic midway course corrections.
- In the case of MGNREGA, engagement with civil society organisations had been institutionalised in the MGNREGA samvads; some of which were attended by the Chief Minister of Rajasthan.
- MGNREGA wages are now directly credited from the central government to a worker's bank account.
- To resolve payment rejections, the Department of Rural Development of the Government of Rajasthan has held numerous discussions.
- These resulted in a workshop involving worker groups and civil society organisations who interacted directly with the aggrieved workers, administrative officers from the village level to the State level, and bankers

Arrow's Paradox in the age of social media (Written by Siddharth Pai)

- Each country has different rules regarding its voting systems
- Some countries use 'first past the post' systems, while others use electoral colleges.
- Yet others use referendums
- The mathematician Kenneth Arrow laid bare the flaws in elections.
- Arrow's doctoral thesis, completed in the 1950s, identified that in any electoral system where three or more preferences exist, a curious paradox comes into play: proponents of the minority voice can dictate the broader choice.
- His finding is now called Arrow's Paradox.
- As recent events around the U.S. election have proved, newly online populaces do not have the ability to discriminate or adequately process what they see online
- Ancient scripture advocates "shravanam, mananam, nidhidhyaasanam" (listen, continuously reflect on what you heard, and then deeply contemplate what you heard before arriving at the truth).
- But today's combination of shortened attention spans, the relentless bombardment of messaging, and the indisputable mathematics of Arrow's proofs make for an incendiary mix.
- This is true even in the most technologically advanced regions such as the State of California in the U.S.
- It is certain that there will be future attempts at influencing elections using both intense messaging which takes advantage of our shortened attention spans as well as the setting of agendas of electoral choice which Arrow first described.
- We should learn from such issues in India. Enlightened legislation may be needed.

A step back in gender equality (Written by Sunny Jose)

- Is the electoral promise of paying women for carrying out domestic work and care work a progressive public policy?
- Women bear a disproportionately high burden of unpaid domestic work and care work in India.
- Females bear more than 83% of the burden of domestic and care work both in Tamil Nadu and India.
- The insights offered by the feminist economist Diane Elson (2017) are pertinent.
- The gist of her argument is this: public policy should aim at closing the huge gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work through 'recognition, reduction and redistribution' (Triple-R).
- Paying monetary benefits carries with it the possible danger of formally endorsing the social norm that domestic and care work are 'women's work', for which they are being paid.

Decoding Cuba's currency reforms (Written by Garimella Subramaniam)

- The devaluation of the Cuban peso (CUP) and the withdrawal of the convertible peso (CUC), the second currency of the country, neither of which can be traded internationally, caps Cuba's gradual economic transition since the end of the Soviet Union.
- During the turmoil in Cuba's sugar industry and a plunge in nickel prices in the 1990s, a volatile CUP had fallen to 140 to the dollar.
- Against this backdrop, the CUC was introduced in 1994 as a unit of account and store of value, to prevent the country's excessive reliance on the U.S. dollar following the end of the former Soviet Union.
- The recent shift is part of the government's bid to boost dollar transactions alongside other hard currencies, especially after tourism was closed in the wake of the pandemic.
- There is concern that the circulation of hard money could reinforce the segmentation and distortions of the past that resulted from access to the CUC for public sector companies at preferential exchange rates.
- The government has been quick to dismiss the voicing of dissent as U.S. interference in Cuba's internal affairs. Havana must take citizens along in order to implement the new reforms