

# My Notes....

## NATIONAL

### CARTOSAT-3 LAUNCHED

ISRO has successfully launched its third-generation earth-imaging satellite CARTOSAT 3 into space from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The launch will enhance India's ability in high-resolution imaging and also reinforce India as a global launch destination for small satellites using its workhorse rocket Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. Besides the CARTOSAT 3 satellite, the PSLV C-47 rocket carried 13 nano satellites from the US, roped in through the new commercial arm New Space India. This would have the most advanced spatial resolution capability in our observation satellites.

What

- The Cartosat 3 follows similar launches in an earlier series deployed for cartography (map-making applications), infrastructure planning, coastal land use and regulation, road-network monitoring and more importantly, change detection in bringing out geographical and man-made features. The mission life of these satellites was five years.
- The CARTOSAT 3 is a 3-axis agile satellite with a spatial resolution parameter of 0.25 m, advancement from the previous series, which had the parameter at less than 1 m.
- Among the American satellites aboard is a technical demonstration spacecraft from US-based Company Analytical Space Inc, which enables users to gain faster access to satellite data.
- While the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle has attracted deals with foreign firms to accommodate satellites from countries such as France, Canada, and the US through its first commercial arm Antrix, the commercial satellites aboard the PSLV C-47 have arrived through agreements through the second commercial entity New Space India, set up in March this year.
- The Cartosat 3 is the most advanced earth observation satellite built by ISRO.



6. The space agency has 13 missions, six launch vehicle events and seven satellite missions, slated till March next year.

## INTERNATIONAL RESOLUTION ON 5G APPROVED

The international resolution approved by UN body International Telecommunication Union at its global meet has resolved concerns raised by the telecom sector on 5G and has put everyone across the globe at par for the roll-out of the next-generation technology, ITU-APT Foundation of India said. After about a month-long deliberation with representatives from 193 countries at Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt, ITU in its World Radio Conference 2019 have struck a balance between deployment of 5G and satellite services which will now be followed across the globe, ITU-APT Foundation of India President Bharat Bhatia told.

What

1. Proposal of India around radiation power levels from base station of 5G was close to the resolution approved by the ITU.
2. Now, base stations (base transceiver station) that will be deployed across the world can also be deployed in India for 5G. The cost of deployment of 5G BTS in India will be at par with the rest of the world.
3. The telecom and satellite were at loggerheads with each other over demand for spectrum at the ITU WRC meet.
4. The telecom bodies argued that the satellite companies are demanding more bandwidth than required for their operations.
5. Russia, China, Europe and India favoured stringent norms of 5G services but later, Russia agreed for usage of 5G in spectrum bands where satellites are being used.
6. As part of the resolution, the ITU has identified large chunks of spectrum for 5G in higher frequency bands which include ranges of 24.25-27.54 Ghz, 37-43.5 Ghz, 47.2-48.2 Ghz and 66-71 Ghz.
7. Currently, India has only identified 275 megahertz of radio waves frequency between 3300-3400 Mhz and 3425-3600 Mhz bands for the 5G auction.
8. A telecom player interested in buying spectrum for 5G services in 3300-3400 Mhz and 3425-3600 Mhz bands will need to shell out at least Rs 9,840 crore as per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's proposal.

### World Radiocommunication conference (WRC)

1. World radiocommunication conference (WRC) is held every three to four years.
2. It is the job of WRC to review, and, if necessary, revise the Radio Regulations, the international treaty governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and the geostationary-satellite and non-geostationary-satellite orbits.
3. Revisions are made on the basis of an agenda determined by the ITU Council, which takes into account recommendations made by previous world radiocommunication conferences.
4. The general scope of the agenda of world radiocommunication conferences is established four to six years in advance, with the final agenda set by the ITU Council two years before the conference, with the concurrence of a majority of Member States.

9. The government has not yet sought reference of Trai on higher frequency range such as 26 GHz band for the 5G services.
10. According to ITU, a 5G application in general should be able to transmit data with 10 gigabit per second speed and in some cases 20 gigabit per second.
11. Industry experts have said the lower data speed case requires around 320 Mhz of spectrum, while higher data speed needs around 670 Mhz.
12. The ITU has also identified use of 40 Ghz band frequency for use of high altitude platform system like installing hot air balloon type structure for transmitting telecom signal at an altitude of 20 kilometers.

## INDIA IN WORLD TALENT RANKING REPORT

India has slipped 6 places to 59 ranks on a global annual list of 63 countries, due to low quality of life and expenditure on education, according to the latest edition of IMD World Talent Ranking, which was topped by Switzerland. The ranking, which is based on the performance in three main categories — investment and development, appeal and readiness, noted that India is also lagging behind fellow BRICs countries – China ranked 42nd on the list, Russia (47th) and South Africa (50th).

What

1. India also witnessed one of the sharpest declines among Asian economies owing to low quality of life, negative impact of brain drain, and the low priority of its economy on attracting and retaining talents.
2. The drop is a combination of several factors including expenditure on education (per student) and the quality of education which may be linked to the GDP growth, said Jose Caballero is a Senior Economist at the IMD Business School Switzerland and Singapore.
3. There are other issues that have an equally important impact than GDP growth, such as the effectiveness of the health system and **women's participation in the labour force**.
4. **On India's appeal factor with regard to the recent pollution issues**, "Remuneration is an issue but when combined with other factors, exacerbate the status of the country in terms of Appeal.
5. **Switzerland retained its title as the world's top talent hub**, while Europe lead the way in fostering the best conditions for competitiveness in a skills-scarce global economy. Denmark was placed second and Sweden, was in third place.
6. The Top 10 was completed by Austria (4th), Luxembourg (5th), Norway (6th), Iceland (7th), Finland (8th), the Netherlands (9th) and Singapore (10th). The countries at the top of the rankings share strong levels of investment in education and a high quality of life.
7. Meanwhile, China ranked in the lower half of the index. China (42nd) fell 3 places due to low ranking on government expenditure per student, the cost of living index and exposure to particle pollution.
8. In Asia, Singapore, along with Hong Kong SAR (15th) and Taiwan (20th) lead in terms of talent competitiveness due to the readiness of talent pool.
9. Singapore rose from 13th to 10th position compared to last year, Hong Kong SAR from 18th to 15th, and Taiwan from 27th to 20th.

- Most leading economies emphasize long-term talent development by focusing on investment and development. This emphasis, however, goes beyond purely academic aspects to encompass the effective implementation of apprenticeships and employee training.

## DRINKING WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

Mumbai is the only city whose tap water meets piped drinking water quality standards set by the Bureau of Indian Standards, according to a study of 21 capital cities released on 16 November 2019. Delhi has the most unsafe tap water, with all samples failing on several parameters. The national capital is one of the 13 cities where all samples have failed to meet the BIS norms.

What

- Under its flagship Jal Jeevan Mission, the Centre aims to provide piped water to all households by 2024.
- The study, conducted by BIS for the Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry, tested 10 samples in each city to see if they met the Indian Standard 10500:2012 (Specification for Drinking Water).
- So far, samples have undergone organoleptic, physical, bacteriological and chemical tests for toxic substances. In the next phase, they will also undergo virological and biological tests for major disease carriers. (The Delhi samples, which have already undergone this testing, came out clean in these two tests.)
- The Centre also plans to include capitals of the northeastern States and smart cities under the testing regime by January 15, 2020, while all district headquarters are expected to be tested by August 15, 2020.

### Flashback

- The Jal Jeevan Mission was announced by Prime Minister on Independence day speech. The Jal Shakti Ministry will work with states to ensure that every rural house gets water by 2024 under the Jal Jeevan Mission.
- A dedicated fund called Rashtriya Jal Jeevan Kosh set up for the mission on the lines of Swachh Bharat Kosh which was set up to take care of the sanitation mission.
- The Jal Shakti Ministry was formed by merging the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Water Resources and Ganga Rejuvenation when the Modi government returned to power.

## FIRST NIGHT TRIAL OF AGNI II MISSILE

India on 16 November 2019 conducted successfully the first **night trial of 'Agni-II'**, its **versatile** surface-to-surface medium-range nuclear-capable missile from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast. The missile has a strike range of 2000 km, soon after it blasted off from a mobile launcher at the Launch Complex-4 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR).

What

- 'Agni-II'**, an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) has already been inducted into the armed forces.

2. A defence official said this was the first time that the sophisticated missile was test fired at night.
3. The entire trajectory of the trial was tracked by a battery of sophisticated radars, telemetry observation stations, electro-optic instruments and two naval ships located near the impact point in the downrange area of the Bay of Bengal.
4. The 20-metre long two-stage ballistic missile has a launch weight of 17 tonnes and can carry a payload of 1000 kg over a distance of 2000 km.
5. The two-stage missile equipped with advanced high accuracy navigation system was guided by a novel state-of-the-art command and control system and propelled by solid rocket propellant system.
6. The 2000 plus km range surface to surface missile has already been inducted and part of countries arsenal for strategic deterrence. It was launched as a regular exercise undertaken by the armed forces.
7. This test was carried out by the specially formed Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Army with logistic support from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

#### Flashback

1. **'Agni-II' was developed by Advanced Systems Laboratory** along with other DRDO laboratories and integrated by Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad.
2. **'Agni-11' is part of the Agni series of missiles** which includes Agni-I with a 700 km range, Agni-III with a 3,000 km range, Agni-IV and Agni-V both having long-range capabilities.
3. The first testfiring of the prototype of Agni-II missile was carried out on April 11, 1999. On May 17, 2010, the trial of nuclear-capable Agni-II ballistic missile with a range of 2,000 km was conducted by the Special Strategic Command Force (SSCF) from the ITR before it was made operational by the Army.
4. The last trial was conducted on February 20, 2018, from the same base.

## NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SOWA-RIGPA

The Union Cabinet approved setting up of the National Institute for Sowa-Rigpa in Leh as an autonomous organization. Sowa-Rigpa is a traditional Tibetan system of medicine practised in the Himalayan belt of India. It is popular in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal's Darjeeling, Himachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Ladakh. This is perhaps one of the first decisions taken by the Union Cabinet on Ladakh's development after it became a Union Territory on October 31 following the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir.

### What

1. The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the establishment of the NISR as an autonomous body under the Ministry of AYUSH at an estimated cost of Rs 47.25 crore.
2. It also approved the creation of the post of director in Level-14 to oversee implementation of the project from the construction stage itself.

3. Setting up of NISR would provide an impetus to the revival of Sowa-Rigpa in the Indian sub-continent and provide opportunities for students of the traditional medicinal system, not only in India but also from other countries.
4. It will be an autonomous national institute under the Ministry of AYUSH with the mandate of undertaking interdisciplinary education and research programmes in Sowa-Rigpa in collaboration with premier national and international institutes and facilitate the integration of different systems of medicine.
5. After setting up of NISR, the synergy among the existing Sowa Rigpa Institutions - Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi and Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh, Union Territory of Ladakh, which are under the administrative control of Ministry of Culture and NISR, will be established.
6. The National Institute of Sowa Rigpa would identify the best Sowa-Rigpa treatment -- including their standard procedures -- within the framework of traditional Sowa-Rigpa principle and possible co-relation with bio-molecular western medicine in providing health care facilities to the general public.

**Sowa-Rig-pa**

- **The diagnostic techniques in Sowa- Rigpa include**
  - visual observation (tongue & urine analysis),
  - touch (pulse, temp., smoothness etc.) and
  - interrogation.
- **The treatment has 4 major sections-**
  - diet,
  - behavior,
  - medicine &
  - accessory/ external therapies.

## PARLIAMENT CLEARS CHIT FUND BILL

Parliament passed a bill which seeks to raise the monetary limits for chit funds and commission for foreman. The Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by voice vote in Rajya Sabha. The bill got Lok Sabha's nod on November 20. The maximum chit amount is proposed to be raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 3 lakh for those managed by individuals or less than four partners, and from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 18 lakh for firms with four or more partners. The maximum commission for foreman, who is responsible for managing the chit, is proposed to be raised from 5 per cent to 7 per cent. The bill also allows the foreman a right to lien against the credit balance from subscribers.

What

1. The bill also introduces words such as fraternity fund, rotating savings and credit institutions to make chit funds more respectable.
2. Chit funds are used by the poor as a scheme acts as both a source of finance and an avenue for savings as because of deficiencies in the banking sector which have existed for years.
3. The bill seeks to increase the limits for aggregate fund collections in chit funds to thrice the current limits and allows the chit fund foreman a right to lien against the credit balance from subscribers. The Lok Sabha passed the proposed amendment on November 20.

4. The distinction between unregulated deposits, ponzi schemes and chit funds pointing out that the government had already passed the banning of **unregulated deposits act and that this bill was also part of the government's efforts to protect "poor and gullible" investors.**
5. All legal chits had to registered with the registrar of chit and that stat level coordination committees would prosecute partners of unregistered chit funds.
6. The amendment will raise the monetary limit of chit funds with less than four partners to Rs 3 lakh from Rs 1 lakh, and the limit for chit funds with four or more partners to Rs 18 lakh from Rs 6 lakh. This was done keeping in mind inflation from 2001.
7. It also raises the maximum limit of the commission taken by the foreman to 7% from 5%.
8. **The amendment will also allow for the terms "fraternity fund" and 'rotating savings and credit institution' to the list of terms that can be used to refer to chit funds.**

## FIRST NBFC TO LIST COMMERCIAL PAPER

Non-bank lender Aditya Birla Finance on 28 November 2019 became the first company to list its commercial papers borrowing of Rs 100 crore on the bourses.

The Kumarmangalam Birla-led company listed its CPs on NSE with a value date of November 28, 2019 and maturity date on February 7, 2020 on BSE and NSE, both the bourses said.

What

1. In October, the capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) asked exchanges to put in place a necessary framework for systems and procedures for listing of commercial papers.
2. Under the guidelines, an issuer who desires to list its CPs needs to send an application for listing along with the specified disclosures to stock exchanges.
3. Companies, NBFCs, other entities with a net worth of at least Rs 100 crore and any other security specifically allowed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are eligible to list commercial papers.

### What is NBFC

1. A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.
2. A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in installments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).

4. ABFL is a diversified non-banking finance company (NBFC) with a long-term credit rating of AAA (Stable) from both Icara as well as India Ratings.

## PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE ACT 2006

A male who has **not reached the age of 21 is a “child” as per the** Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. However, a male aged between 18 and 21 marrying a female above 18 years will not be punishable under the Act for contracting a child marriage, the Supreme Court has ruled. The judgment came from a bench of Justices Mohan M Shantanagoudar and Aniruddha Bose, which set aside a December 2010 order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court directing registration of FIR under Section 9 of the Act against a man for allegedly concealing his age of 17 years as per his birth certificate while seeking police protection to marry.

What

1. He had approached the High Court seeking police protection as the family of the girl — who was above 18 at the time — was not agreeing to their union.
2. The HC granted protection on April 26, 2010. However, on November 26, 2010, the **HC while hearing a plea by the girl’s father recalled the earlier order and directed** registration of the FIR.
3. This was on the ground that in the application seeking police protection, he had stated his age as 23, whereas he was 17 according to his school record.
4. **Section 9 lays down “punishment for male adult marrying a child” and says that “whoever, being a male adult above eighteen years of age, contracts a child marriage shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or with both.”**
5. The SC, however, said that Section 9 would not apply even if his age was 17 as the said provision clearly states that **it will only apply where the “male adult” is “above eighteen years of age”**.
6. The court also went into the history and intent of the lawmakers to rule that the action would not attract the rigour of Section 9 even if he was above 18 and below 21.
7. The ruling **noted that “the 2006 Act does not make any provision for punishing** a female adult who marries a male child.
8. The judgment noted how the law was intended more as protection for girls, given the **social realities, and said “Section 9 of the 2006 Act must be viewed in the backdrop of this gender dimension to the practice of child marriage”**.
9. **The court ruled that the words “male adult above eighteen years of age, contracts a child marriage” in Section 9 of the 2006 Act should be read as “male adult above eighteen years of age marries a child”**.

## GOM FOR LAND LEASING ISSUES

The **Prime Minister’s Office has set up a group of 12 ministers** to resolve differences over the proposed Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016. The GoM includes the ministers of defence, home, agriculture and rural development. A GoM has been constituted by PMO for examining the draft Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016, prepared by Niti Aayog and recommending the way forward in the light of necessity, practicality and desirability of encouraging land leasing, said a government order.



### What

1. The model legislation, drafted by the Aayog three years ago, is yet to be adopted by states. Most state governments have either legally banned or slapped restrictions on agricultural land leasing that have forced tenancy to be informal, insecure and inefficient.
2. The rural development ministry which had reservations over the model legislation, and did not pursue it aggressively with the states amid apprehensions over the framework leading to loss of farm income.
3. It is important to sort out the differences at the GoM level over issues of national importance before it is taken up by the Cabinet, the official said on condition of anonymity.
4. The move came after the Aayog took up with the PMO the issue of the crucial legislation being held up. The ministers of social justice and empowerment, tribal affairs, environment and forest, railway and commerce and industry are also part of the group.
5. A Niti Aayog expert committee led by T Haq had proposed legalising land leasing to promote agricultural efficiency, equity and poverty reduction and to ensure complete security of the ownership rights of the landowner as well as security of tenure for the tenant through the agreed lease period.
6. Terms and conditions of lease were to be determined mutually by the landowner and the tenant.
7. The share of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP) is only about 14%, but it employs **49% of the country's total workforce** and 64% of the rural workforce.
8. Landholding sizes, however, remained very small. The Aayog thinks that legalisation of land leasing will reduce the pressure of population on agriculture and enable small farmers to augment their size of operational holdings by leasing in land.

### MERGER OF UT BILL 2019 INTRODUCED

The government on 26 November 2019 introduced in the Lok Sabha a Bill to merge two Union Territories — Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli — into one. The proposed legislation — The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill 2019 — was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy.

### What

1. The move comes three months after Jammu and Kashmir was divided into two UTs — Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
2. The merger of the two UTs, located along the western coast near Gujarat, will be done for better administration and check duplications of various work.
3. So far, both the Union Territories have separate budgets and different secretariats even though they are just 35 km apart. Dadra and Nagar Haveli has just one district while Daman and Diu has two.
4. The merged Union Territory is likely to be named as Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and its headquarters could be Daman and Diu.

5. On August 5, the central government had announced the abrogation of the special status given to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and its division into two Union Territories.
6. The country currently has nine Union Territories after the creation of the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. However, with the merger of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the number of UTs will come down to eight.

## INTERNATIONAL

### FRAMEWORK ON CURRENCY SWAP REVISED FOR SAARC

Reserve Bank said it has put in place a revised framework on currency swap arrangement for SAARC countries for 2019-2022. The SAARC currency swap facility came into operation on November 15, 2012 with an intention to provide a backstop line of funding for short-term foreign exchange liquidity requirements or balance of payment crises till longer-term arrangements are made.

What

1. Based on the terms and conditions of the framework, the RBI would enter into bilateral swap agreements with SAARC central banks, who want to avail swap facility.
2. Under the framework for 2019-22, the RBI will continue to offer a swap arrangement within the overall corpus of USD 2 billion. The drawals can be made in US dollar, euro or Indian rupee.
3. The framework provides certain concessions for swap drawals in Indian rupee. The facility will be available to all SAARC member countries, subject to their signing the bilateral swap agreements.
4. The framework is valid from November 14, 2019 to November 13, 2022.
5. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries are -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

#### Flashback

1. A currency swap is an agreement in which two parties exchange the principal amount of a loan and the interest in one currency for the principal and interest in another currency.
2. At the inception of the swap, the equivalent principal amounts are exchanged at the spot rate.
3. During the length of the swap each party pays the interest on the swapped principal loan amount.
4. At the end of the swap, the principal amounts are swapped back at either the prevailing spot rate, or at a pre-agreed rate such as the rate of the original exchange of principals. Using the original rate would remove transaction risk on the swap.
5. Currency swaps are used to obtain foreign currency loans at a better interest rate than a company could obtain by borrowing directly in a foreign market or as a method of hedging transaction risk on foreign currency loans which it has already taken out.

### INDIA RENEWS COMMITMENT TO BHUTAN

The 2nd Annual India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks were held in Delhi on 29 November 2019 with India renewing its commitment to support projects under

**Bhutan's ongoing five year plan (2018-23).** The Annual Development Cooperation Talks is an important bilateral mechanism to **review the entire gamut of India's** development partnership with Bhutan.

What

1. India has committed assistance of Rs. 4500 Crore for implementation of development projects and Rs. 400 Crore for transitional Trade Support Facility **during Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan (2018 - 2023).**
2. 51 large and intermediate projects and 359 Small Development Projects (SDPs)/High Impact Community Development Projects (HICPDs) are at various stages of implementation under the 12th Five Year Plan.
3. Both sides recalled the successful and productive visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bhutan in August 2019 with several significant outcomes which included inauguration of Mangdhechu HEP and Ground Earth Station for South Asia Satellite and launch of RuPay card in Bhutan.
4. They also recalled the very successful visit to India of Prime Minister of Bhutan Dr. Lotay Tshering in December 2018 and in May 2019 for the swearing-in ceremony of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Foreign Minister of Bhutan, Dr Tandi Dorji also visited India from 17-23 November and held talks with the External Affairs Minister of India.
5. With **Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan (2018-2023)** entering its second year, the two sides reviewed and expressed satisfaction at the overall progress of the ongoing Project Tied Assistance (PTA) projects, as well as the SDPs/HICDPs.
6. Bhutanese Foreign Secretary commended **India's role in socio-economic** transformation of Bhutan and also highlighted the impact of HICDPs at the grassroots level. During the talks, both sides also agreed to implement 21 new PTA projects, in addition to 51 ongoing ones.
7. The two sides agreed to hold the next Development Cooperation Talks in 2020 in Thimphu on a mutually agreed date.

## PAKISTAN TEST SHAHEEN-I MISSILE

Pakistan on 18 November 2019 conducted a successful test launch of a surface-to-surface ballistic missile capable of delivering all types of warheads up to 650 kilometres, the military announced. According to a press release issued by the media wing of Pakistani military, the launch of Shaheen-I missile was held as part of a training exercise "aimed at testing the operational readiness of Army Strategic Forces Command".

What

1. The Shaheen-1 missile is capable of delivering all types of warheads up to range of 650 KMs.
2. The launch was aimed at testing the operational readiness of Army Strategic Forces Command (ASFC) ensuring Pakistan's credible minimum deterrence.
3. The Pakistani missile test came days after India conducted the first night trial of 'Agni-II', its versatile surface-to-surface medium range nuclear-capable missile.
4. The 'Agni-II' missile has a strike range of 2,000 km and is an intermediate range ballistic missile. It has already been inducted into the armed forces.

5. The Pakistani missile test took place amid bilateral tensions between India and Pakistan after New Delhi abrogated the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status and bifurcated it into two union territories.

## **SRI LANKA'S SEVENTH** PRESIDENT

Gotabaya Rajapaksa was on 18 November 2019 **sworn in as Sri Lanka's seventh** President at an ancient Buddhist temple, a venue chosen to reflect the massive mandate he got from the Sinhalese majority, as he vowed to protect all communities while giving foremost priority to Buddhism. The swearing-in ceremony took place at the Ruwanweli Seya, a stupa and a hemispherical structure containing relics and considered sacred to Buddhists all over the world, in the ancient north central town of Anuradhapura, around 200 km from the national capital Colombo.

What

1. Rajapaksa is the first president to be sworn in outside Colombo. Clad in immaculate white, Rajapaksa, 70, signed the official document in the presence of Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya at the auspicious time of 11:49 am after being administered the oath by the **president's secretary Udaya R Seneviratne**.
2. The stupa which is considered sacred to Buddhists all over the world was built by King Dutugemunu in the 140 B.C., who reigned over the country after defeating Tamil King Elara.
3. Rajapaksa was credited for ending the military campaign of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who ran a 30-year war to create a separate Tamil homeland in the north and east of the island.
4. Rajapaksa is also the first civil servant to become president, only the first sibling of a president to win the presidency, the first president in history to be inducted into office without even spending a day as a parliamentarian.

## **SRI LANKA'S NEW PRIME** MINISTER

**Sri Lanka's former strongman** Mahinda Rajapaksa on 21 November 2019 took oath as the new prime minister of the island nation after incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe formally stepped down from his post. Rajapaksa, the elder brother of the newly-elected President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, will function as the prime minister of the caretaker cabinet until the general election in August 2020.

What

1. The 74-year-old leader, who describes **himself as "a rebel with a cause"**, earlier served as the country's president from 2005-2015, becoming **South Asia's longest-serving** leader. He was also prime minister for a brief period in 2018.
2. **Rajapaksa became the country's youngest ever parliamentarian** in 1970 at the age of 24.
3. The two brothers — Rajapaksa and Gotabaya — led a decisive campaign that helped **end the island nation's three decade long civil war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**.

## ECONOMY

### EXTENSION TO 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION APPROVED

The union cabinet on 27 November 2019 extended to the term of the Fifteenth Finance Commission by a year, asking it to submit an interim report for fiscal year 2020-21 and a full report for fiscal years 2021-22 to 2025-26—a decision apparently **taken to factor in Jammu and Kashmir's new status**. The extension of the term will enable the Commission to examine various comparable estimates for financial projections in view of reforms and the new realities to finalize its recommendations for the period 2020-2026.

What

1. The cabinet decision means the Commission will recommend its award to six fiscal years, instead of the usual five. The cabinet decision does not fall foul of the Constitution.
2. Article 280 of the Constitution states that the President shall constitute a Finance Commission at the expiration of every fifth year or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary.
3. Simply put, this means that while the Commission can give recommendations for six years through two reports (2020-21 to 2025-26), when the Sixteenth Finance Commission is set up, it will consider devolution for 2025-26 to 2029-30, and not from 2026-27.
4. This will essentially keep the award period of the 15th Finance Commission at five years, since these are just recommendations which the government accepts.
5. The Constitution just mandates that every five years a Finance Commission has to be set up. **Today's cabinet decision is not in contravention of that.**
6. The interim report will enable Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her bureaucrats to prepare the 2020-21 Budget. This course of action has precedence in at least three previous Finance Commissions.
7. **Union territories usually get their resources from the central government's** share of the divisible pool, but the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act mandates the commission to treat the two union territories as a state.
8. **Ladakh, on the other hand, is expected to get funds out of the centre's share, like any other union territory.**

### GOVT SCRAPS NSO'S CONSUMER EXPENDITURE SURVEY

The Government has decided to scrap the **National Statistical Office's (NSO's)** consumer expenditure survey conducted in 2017-18 **over "data quality"**. In view of the data quality issues, the Ministry (of Statistics and Programme Implementation) has decided not to release the consumer expenditure survey results of 2017-2018. The ministry is separately examining the feasibility of conducting the next consumer expenditure survey in 2020-21 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process.

What

1. This implies that India will unlikely have an estimate on poverty for a period of 10 years. The previous round of survey took place in 2011-12.

2. The government uses this dataset to estimate poverty and inequality in the country, apart from using it for changing the base year for gross domestic product (GDP).
3. This is the first time the government has scrapped an NSO survey of this scale since the erstwhile NSSO was established in 1950.
4. The government said it had found certain deficiencies in the survey report which were later referred to a committee. It further argued that the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics had recommended a change in base for the GDP series from 2017-18, as it was not considered to be an “appropriate year”.

#### Flashback

1. Consumer expenditure surveys are normally conducted with a gap of five years. But in 2011-12, the survey was conducted after two years, as 2009-10, when the previous round of the survey took place, was a drought year. The findings of both 2009-10 and 2011-12 survey reports are in the public domain.
2. The ministry said a committee examined the **survey report and noted these “discrepancies”** and came out with recommendations, including a refinement in the survey methodology and improving the data quality on a “concurrent basis.”
3. The survey — Key Indicators: Household Consumer Expenditure in India — showed the average amount of money spent by a person in a month fell by 3.7 per cent to Rs 1,446 in 2017-18 from Rs 1,501 in 2011-12.
4. The figures for monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) are in real terms, meaning it has been adjusted for inflation keeping 2009-10 as the base year. In 2011-12, the real MPCE had risen 13 per cent over a period of two years.

## GDP BASE YEAR

The government told Parliament that the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics (ACNAS) has recommended to the ministry of statistics and programme implementation to consider 2020-21 as the next base year of National Accounts in view of the structural reforms in the economy. The issue of the base year revision was discussed by ACNAS again in its recent meeting held on 30 October, 2019 and it was recommended to the Ministry to consider 2020-21 as the next base year of National Accounts in view of the structural reforms in the economy. The present base year for gross domestic product is 2011-12.

What

1. The exercise of base year revision of national accounts is guided by the ACNAS comprising experts from the central and state government, academia, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other domain specific experts.
2. While selecting a new base year, several activities, including new surveys, are to be planned and carried out to have the latest data for use in the revised base year.
3. The ACNAS had earlier recommended to revise the base year of National Accounts from 2011-12 to 2017-18 in view of the likely availability of requisite data.

4. The ministry had on November 15 said the committee had recommended that for rebasing of the GDP series, 2017-18 is not an appropriate year to be used as the new base year.

5. As per the United Nations System of National Accounts (UN SNA)-2008, the member countries are required to revise the base year of their macro-economic indicators like GDP, Gross Value Added Index of Industrial Production, and Consumer Price Index.

6. The government has decided to create a Statistical Business Register by utilizing the data collected through 7th Economic Census. The Statistical Business Register will contain information

pertaining to key economic activities of the establishments.

#### Flashback

1. The United Nations System of National Accounts (UN SNA)-2008 is the internationally agreed standard set of recommendations on how to compile measures of economic activity.
2. The UN SNA describes a coherent, consistent and integrated set of macroeconomic accounts in the context of a set of internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications and accounting rules.
3. The UN SNA provides an overview of economic processes, recording how production is distributed among consumers, businesses, government and foreign nations.
4. It shows how income originating in production, modified by taxes and transfers, flows to these groups and how they allocate these flows to consumption, saving and investment.
5. Consequently, the national accounts are one of the building blocks of macroeconomic statistics forming a basis for economic analysis and policy formulation.
6. The UN SNA is intended for use by all countries, having been designed to accommodate the needs of countries at different stages of economic development.
7. It also provides an overarching framework for standards in other domains of economic statistics, facilitating the integration of these statistical systems to achieve consistency with the national accounts.

The new base year

1. From January 2015, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) updated base year for GDP calculation to 2011-12, replacing the old series base year of 2004-05, as per the recommendations of the National Statistical Commission.
2. Base year is carefully selected because of the impact it has on the numbers and the year chosen is usually one in which no serious anomaly was present.
3. The new series includes corporate information from the MCA21 database of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs instead of the results obtained from the RBI study on company finances, which means a more comprehensive inclusion of corporate data in GDP numbers.
4. It also helps improve accuracy, particularly for the services sector, which accounts for about 60 per cent of GDP.

Why is base year changed?

1. Change of base year to calculate GDP is done in line with the global exercise to capture economic information accurately.
2. Ideally, the base year should be changed after every five years to capture the changing economy. GDP based on 2004-05 did not reflect current economic situation correctly.
3. The new series is also compliant with the United Nations guidelines in System of National Accounts-2008. It takes information for the corporate sector and has better estimates of the unorganised sector from 2010-11 National Sample Survey on unincorporated enterprises and data on sales and service taxes.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### BILL TO BAN E-CIGARETTES PASSED

Lok Sabha on 27 November 2019 passed a bill which seeks to ban electronic cigarettes, with Health Minister Harsh Vardhan saying such a measure was necessary to protect the youth from a new intoxication being promoted by companies as a new "fashion". The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Bill, 2019, seeks to replace an ordinance issued on September 18.

What

1. The minister also said that the Indian Council of Medical Research issued a white paper on e-cigarette and demanded its ban.
2. The Bill makes the manufacturing, production, import, export, distribution, transport, sale, storage or advertisements of such alternative smoking devices a cognisable offence, attracting a jail term and a fine.
3. First-time violators will face a jail term of up to one year and a fine of Rs 1 lakh. For subsequent offences, a jail term of up to three years or a fine of Rs 5 lakh, or both, will be imposed, according to the ordinance.
4. The storage of e-cigarettes shall also be punishable with imprisonment of up to six months or a fine of up to Rs 50,000, or both.

#### What are e-cigarettes?

1. E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that heat a solution of nicotine and different flavours to create aerosol, which is then inhaled.
2. These devices belong to a category of vapour-based nicotine products called Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS).
3. E-cigarettes and other ENDS products may look like their traditional counterparts (regular cigarettes or cigars), but they also come in other shapes and sizes and can resemble daily use products, including pens and USB drives.
4. Several companies selling ENDS in India have positioned these products as a safer, less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes or as devices that could help users quit smoking.



## ENVIRONMENTAL DNA (EDNA)

In a first, researchers have shown that environmental DNA (eDNA) can be used to detect the presence of an endangered bird species by collecting and analysing small amounts of water from the pools where they drink -- an advance that may lead to better assessment of animal and bird populations in the wild. The study, published in the journal *Endangered Species Research*, noted that eDNA -- which is DNA collected from environmental samples like soil, seawater, or even air rather than direct sampling from an individual organism -- can be used to detect the presence of threatened terrestrial species in an ecosystem.

What

1. The researchers, including those from the Charles Darwin University in Australia, developed a genetic probe that targets and identifies the eDNA of the endangered Gouldian finch -- a rainbow-coloured bird found in northern Australia.
2. The researchers developed a test in which multiple copies of a species-specific probe is made to detect Gouldian finch DNA.
3. The technique also amplifies probes against a fragment of DNA found in the mitochondria of estrildid finches -- a family that includes masked finches, and long-tailed finches.
4. Gouldian finches, the researchers said, often drank at waterholes in mixed flocks with the masked finches and long-tailed finches.
5. The research team showed that the finch eDNA could be reliably detected from a 200 millilitres of water samples collected from waterholes visited by the birds in the last 48 hours.
6. The study noted that in the waterholes with the most birds, Gouldian finch DNA could still be detected 14 days after sample collection -- regardless of whether the sample was stored at room temperature, or refrigerated.
7. The researchers said if the Gouldian test came negative, the eDNA test still worked -- meaning the Gouldian finches were not present at that site.

## NEW OXYGEN MYSTERY ON MARS

**NASA's Curiosity rover's has added a new mystery for scientists studying Mars**, with samples from the rover showing a seasonal change around Oxygen levels near the surface of the Gale Crater on the red planet. NASA found that Oxygen levels throughout spring and summer rose by as much as 30 per cent.

What

1. NASA in its press statement notes that this pattern repeated each spring, though the amount of oxygen added to the atmosphere varied. According to their conclusions, some specific conditions or processes on Mars were likely producing Oxygen and then taking it away.
2. According to data from the Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) portable chemistry lab, which is inside the belly of the Curiosity rover, 95 per cent of the Martian atmosphere is carbon dioxide by volume.
3. The rest of the gases are: 2.6 percent molecular nitrogen, 1.9 percent argon (Ar), 0.16 percent molecular oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>), and 0.06 per cent carbon monoxide (CO). Oxygen, which is needed to breathe by most beings on Earth is barely present on Mars.

4. While scientists also found that nitrogen and argon follow a predictable seasonal pattern, waxing and waning in concentration in Gale Crater, oxygen did not behave as expected.
5. Mars experts have tried to explain the rise and fall in levels of oxygen on the red planet. The possibility that CO<sub>2</sub> or water (H<sub>2</sub>O) molecules could have released oxygen when they broke apart in the atmosphere was considered. But it was concluded that five times more water above Mars would be needed to produce the extra oxygen.

#### Flashback

1. Curiosity is a car-sized rover designed to explore the crater Gale on Mars as part of NASA's Mars Science Laboratory mission (MSL).
2. Curiosity was launched from Cape Canaveral on November 26, 2011 and landed on Aeolis Palus inside Gale on Mars on August 6, 2012.
3. The Bradbury Landing site was less than 2.4 km (1.5 mi) from the center of the rover's touchdown target after a 560 million km (350 million mi) journey.
4. The rover's goals include an investigation of the Martian climate and geology; assessment of whether the selected field site inside Gale has ever offered environmental conditions favorable for microbial life, including investigation of the role of water; and planetary habitability studies in preparation for human exploration.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### GLOBAL MIGRATION REPORT 2020

India continues to be the largest country of origin of international migrants with a 17.5 million-strong diaspora across the world, and it received the highest remittance of \$78.6 billion from Indians living abroad, the U.N. migration agency said. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) **said in its 'Global Migration Report 2020' that the number of international migrants in 2019 is now estimated at 270 million** and the top destination remains the U.S., at nearly 51 million.

What

1. In its latest global report, the IOM noted that the overall figure represents just a **tiny fraction of the world's population**, although it is a 0.1% increase on the level indicated in its last report, published two years ago.
2. This figure remains **a very small percentage of the world's population (at 3.5%)**, meaning that the vast majority of people globally (96.5%) are estimated to be residing **in the country in which they were born**, IOM's Global Migration Report 2020 said.
3. According to the U.N. agency, more than half of all international migrants (141 million) live in Europe and North America.
4. An estimated 52% are male, and nearly two-thirds of all migrants are looking for work; **that's around 164 million people**.
5. India continued to be the largest country of origin of international migrants. It had the largest number of migrants living abroad (17.5 million), followed by Mexico (11.8 million) and China (10.7 million). The top destination country remained the United States (50.7 million international migrants).

6. The report also noted that international remittances increased to \$689 billion in 2018. The top three remittance recipients were India (\$78.6 billion), China (\$67.4 billion) and Mexico (\$35.7 billion).
7. The United States remained the top remittance-sending country (\$68 billion) followed by the United Arab Emirates (\$44.4 billion) and Saudi Arabia (\$36.1 billion).
8. In Africa, Asia and Europe, most international migrants stay within their regions of birth, but the majority of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean and North America do not.
9. Focusing on the Middle East, data showed that Gulf countries have some of the largest numbers of temporary labour migrants in the world, including the United Arab Emirates, where they make up almost 90% of the population.
10. Syria has the highest internally population of displaced people, at 6.1 million, followed by Colombia (5.8 million) and the Congo (3.1 million).
11. Finally, turning to the impact of climate and weather disasters, the report notes that Typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines contributed to the fact that 3.8 million people were newly displaced there at the end of 2018, the largest number globally.

#### Flashback

1. Since 2000, IOM has been producing world migration reports. The World Migration Report 2020, the tenth in the world migration report series, has been produced to contribute to increased understanding of migration throughout the world.
2. This new edition presents key data and information on migration as well as thematic chapters on highly topical migration issues, and is structured to focus on two key contributions for readers: Part I: key information on migration and migrants (including migration-related statistics); and Part II: balanced, evidence-based analysis of complex and emerging migration issues.
3. This flagship World Migration Report has been **produced in line with IOM's Environment Policy** and is available online only. Printed hard copies have not been made in order to reduce paper, printing and transportation impacts.

## 47TH CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde on 18 November 2019 took oath as the 47th Chief Justice of India. President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath of office of Chief Justice of India to Justice Bobde. Outgoing Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi on October 18 had recommended Justice Bobde, the second senior-most judge of the apex court, as his successor. Justice Bobde will serve as CJI for around 18 months and retire on April 23, 2021.

What

1. Justice SA Bobde is the eighth CJI whose parent high court is the Bombay High Court. The previous seven judges who started their careers in the higher judiciary from the Bombay High Court and went on to become CJI are Justice HJ Kania, Justice PB Gajendragadkar, Justice JC Shah, Justice YV Chandrachud, Justice MH Kania, Justice SP Bharucha and Justice SH Kapadia.

2. Born in Nagpur on April 24, 1956, Justice Bobde is the son of former Maharashtra Advocate General Arvind Bobde and brother of veteran lawyer Vinod Bobde.
3. Justice Bobde was part of the five-judge constitution bench hearing the longest running Ayodhya land dispute case.
4. Justice Ranjan Gogoi, the 46th Chief Justice of India, took charge on October 3, 2018 and demitted office on 17 November 2019.

## HNLC BANNED BY GOVERNMENT

Meghalaya-based insurgent group Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) has been banned by the Central government for its increased activities of violence and other subversive acts. In a notification, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said the HNLC, along with all its factions, wings and frontal organisations, has been openly declared as **its objective the secession of the State's areas**, which are largely inhabited by Khasi and Jaintia tribals, from the Indian Union.

What

1. The group continues to intimidate and bully civilians to extort funds, maintains links with other insurgent groups of the Northeast to carry out acts of extortion and intimidation, and maintains camps in Bangladesh to give sanctuary and training to its cadre.
2. The Central government is also of the opinion that **HNLC's activities are** detrimental to the sovereignty and integrity of India.
3. If these are not immediately curbed and controlled, the HNLC will regroup and rearm itself, expand its cadre base, procure sophisticated weapons, cause loss of lives of civilians and security forces, and accelerate its anti-national activities.
4. Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967), (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central government hereby declares the HNLC, along with all its factions, wings and front organisations, as unlawful association, the notification said.
5. The Ministry also listed the violence perpetrated by the HNLC in recent past that includes four incidents involving killing of one civilian, during the period from January 1, 2015, to July 31, 2019, arrest of 16 of its cadres, recovery of four weapons, surrender of 14 of its cadres and kidnapping of four persons.
6. Earlier, the HNLC was declared a banned organisation on November 16, 2000 but the ban was later lifted.

## PETA INDIA'S 2019 PERSON OF THE YEAR

Team India skipper Virat Kohli has been named People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India's Person of the Year for 2019. Kohli's efforts to improve conditions for animals include sending a letter on PETA India's behalf to officials calling for the release of Malti, an elephant used for rides at Amer Fort, who was reportedly violently beaten by eight men; helping PETA India call for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, to be updated in order to deter acts of violence towards animals through stronger penalties for animal abusers; and more.

What

1. Kohli also reportedly swung by an animal shelter in Bengaluru to give lots of love to the injured and formerly neglected dogs there and to send a message to fans to adopt companion animals and never buy them from breeders or pet stores.
2. Virat Kohli is a fierce animal rights proponent who never hesitates to run out cruelty to animals any way he can, says PETA India Director of Celebrity and Public Relations Sachin Bangera. PETA India encourages everyone to follow his lead and always be an advocate for animals in need.
3. Past recipients of the award include Shashi Tharoor, former Supreme Court Justice KS Panicker Radhakrishnan and actors Anushka Sharma, Sunny Leone, Sonam Kapoor, Kapil Sharma, Hema Malini, R. Madhavan, and Jacqueline Fernandez.

#### Flashback

1. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is the largest animal rights organization in the world, with more than 6.5 million members and supporters.
2. PETA focuses its attention on the four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time: in laboratories, in the food industry, in the clothing trade, and in the entertainment industry.
3. Founded in March 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk and fellow animal rights activist Alex Pacheco, the organization first caught the public's attention in the summer of 1981 during what became known as the Silver Spring monkeys case, a widely publicized dispute about experiments conducted on 17 macaque monkeys inside the Institute of Behavioral Research in Silver Spring, Maryland.

## INDIA SEVENTH-MOST AFFECTED BY TERROR

**India is at seventh place in a global think tank's list of countries** most affected by terrorism. The annual report by the Sydney-based Institute for Economics and Peace states that the country most affected by terrorism in 2018 was Afghanistan (7,379 killed), displacing Iraq (1,054 killed) as the deadliest country. Iraq, now at second place, is followed by Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan and Somalia, in that order.

What

1. The report states that 8,473 Indians have died since 2001 at the hands of terrorists. However, the 2018 death count was 10 per cent lower than in 2017, and 53 per cent lower than its peak in 2009.
2. This trend indicates that terror attacks in India are becoming steadily less bloody. In 1998, about 4.3 people were killed in each attack. That dropped to 1.6 deaths per attack in 2008, and 0.5 in 2018. "In 2018 alone, 69 per cent of attacks had zero fatalities and 22 per cent had one fatality.
3. The Institute for Economics and Peace counts armed insurgent groups in Kashmir and the north-east, such as Hizbul Mujahideen as "terrorist groups". **Based on that, it reports that "Compared to other countries amongst the ten most impacted, India faces a wider range of terrorist groups, with Islamist, communist and separatist groups all active in the country."**

4. **Jammu & Kashmir is India's region most impacted by terrorism in 2018**, with 321 attacks, resulting in 123 deaths, most of which were perpetrated by the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
5. **India's second most impacted region was Chhattisgarh**, in the centre of the communist "red corridor". Chhattisgarh suffered 138 attacks in 2018, resulting in 123 deaths, all from Maoist extremists. While there were far fewer attacks than in Kashmir, the death toll in Chhattisgarh is identical.
6. In the 2019 Global Terrorism Index, worldwide deaths from terrorism fell for the fourth consecutive year after peaking in 2014, when 33,555 people were killed in terror-related incidents. Since then, the number of deaths has steadily decreased to 15,952 in the current year.

## FIRST EVER PICSA INDEX

Bangalore emerged as India's highest ranked city at No. 83 in a new index of the world's 113 cities in terms of economic and social inclusivity, topped by Zurich in Switzerland. The first-ever Prosperity & Inclusion City Seal and Awards (PICSA) Index, released in the Basque Country capital of Bilbao in northern Spain, is designed to showcase not only the quantity of economic growth of a city but also its quality and distribution across populations.

What

1. Delhi at 101 and Mumbai at 107 are the other Indian cities to make at the index, with the top 20 awarded a PICSA Seal as the world's highest-ranked cities building inclusive prosperity. Bilbao, the host city of the new index, is ranked at 20.
2. As the first ever non-commercial ranking index, PICSA provides a new measure of economic productivity that goes beyond GDP to provide a holistic account of how well people are doing in the economy and which have populations that are most empowered to contribute to its economy and share in its benefits.
3. There is increasing recognition in government and also the private sector that success needs to be judged in new ways: factors like health, housing affordability and quality of life needs to be put alongside jobs, skills and incomes when measuring prosperity.
4. Commissioned by Basque institutions and compiled by D&L Partners, the PICSA Index measures factors such as the affordability of housing and access to education and healthcare, besides GDP per capita.
5. It marks the first time that the world's major cities have been ranked not just by the size and health of their economy, but for their efforts to build inclusive and prosperous environments for all its citizens.
6. Zurich, as the number one, scores strongly across all measures, particularly on quality of life, work, housing, leisure, safety, and education with the Swiss higher education system attaining an especially high score.
7. Vienna, the Austrian capital in second place, scores close to top marks on healthcare. Copenhagen, Luxembourg and Helsinki complete the top five.
8. The top 10 cities in emerging markets are St Petersburg (50th), Bucharest (53th), Moscow (59th), Zagreb (69th), Sofia (72nd), Montevideo (76th), Buenos Aires (78th), Istanbul (79th), Belgrade (80th) and Bangkok (81st).

## INTERNATIONAL PRESS FREEDOM AWARD

Indian journalist Neha Dixit was one of several recipients of the 2019 International Press Freedom Awards, awarded by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a non-profit organization whose aim is to enable journalists to work without fear of reprisal. Ms. Dixit, a Delhi-based journalist who reports on politics, social justice and gender in South Asia, has faced harassment both online and offline for her work.

What

1. The other awardees were Patricia Mello, a Brazilian journalist, who was attacked online for writing critical stories in 2018 of the then presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro; Lucia Ubau and Miguel Mora of Nicaraguan broadcaster 100% Noticias who were jailed for six months for covering unrest; and Maxence Mubyazi, co-founder of an online Tanzanian discussion platform, who has been charged under the **country's cybercrime laws** and had to appear in court 81 times, as per CPJ.
2. Editor of Pakistani newspaper Dawn, Zaffar Abbas, won CPJ's 2019 Gwen Ifill Press Freedom Award. The newspaper and its reporters have frequently come under government pressure.
3. Nations are becoming far less tolerant of an independent press, said American journalist Shep Smith, who hosted the evening. Mr. Smith said governments have devised less crude techniques to stifle journalists and censor their work.
4. Restrictive licensing regulations, cybercrime laws, and false news laws are increasingly being applied to online journalism, and to independent blogging and social media users, often with harsher penalties than their offline equivalents.

### Flashback

1. The International Press Freedom Awards honor journalists or their publications around the world who show courage in defending press freedom despite facing attacks, threats, or imprisonment.
2. Established in 1991, the awards are administered by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent, non-governmental organization based in New York City.
3. In addition to recognizing individuals, the organization seeks to focus local and international media coverage on countries where violations of press freedom are particularly serious.

## CONSTITUTION DAY

Constitution Day is being celebrated across the country to mark the adoption of the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly on this day (26 November) in 1949. The Constitution Day is also known as Samvidhan diwas. The Constitution Day was first celebrated in 2015 as a mark of tribute to India's first law minister Bhim Rao Ambedkar, who played a pivotal role in the drafting of the Constitution. The declaration regarding the same was made by PM Narendra Modi on October 11, 2015, while laying the foundation stone of Statue of Equality in Mumbai.

What

1. November 26, which was earlier celebrated as Law Day, marks the day when India had adopted its Constitution back in 1949, more than two years after attaining independence from the British rule.
2. The Constitution came into effect next year on 26 January, 1950, so as to commemorate the pledge of Purna Swaraj, passed in the Lahore session of the Congress on this day in 1930.
3. Jammu and Kashmir celebrates the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of India on November 26 for the first time since the abrogation of Article 370 that ended the J&K Constitution that was in place since 1957.