

My Notes....

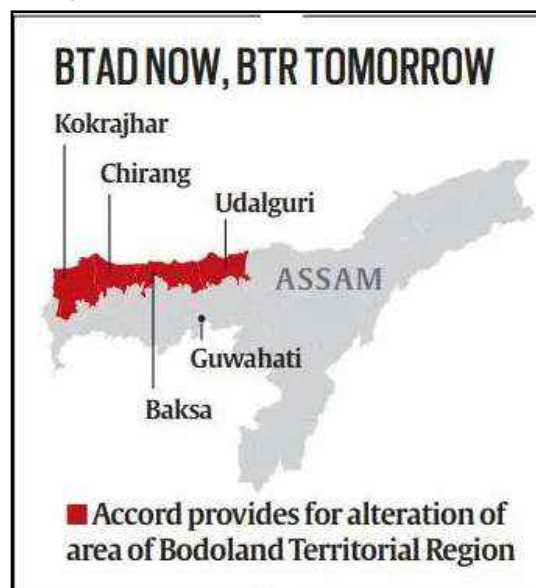
NATIONAL

BODO AGREEMENT 2020

On 27 January 2020, the Centre, the Assam government and Bodo groups — including all factions of the militant National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) — signed an agreement for peace and development. Home Minister Amit Shah described it as the “final and comprehensive solution” of the long-standing Bodo issue.

What is the Bodo issue?

1. Bodos are the single largest community among the notified Scheduled Tribes in Assam. Part of the larger umbrella of Bodo-Kachari, the Bodos constitute about 5-6% of Assam's population.
2. The first organised demand for a Bodo state came in 1967-68 under the banner of the political party Plains Tribals Council of Assam.
3. In 1985, when the Assam Movement culminated in the Assam Accord, many Bodos saw it as essentially focusing on the interests of the Assamese-speaking community.
4. In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) led by Upendra Nath Brahma revived the Bodo statehood demand. The armed group Bodo Security Force arose, under the leadership of Ranjan Daimary, in October 1986.
6. It subsequently renamed itself NDFB, and later split into factions.
7. “All NDFB factions under SoO [Suspension of Operations] shall abjure path of violence, surrender their weapons and disband their armed organisations within one month of signing this MoS,” the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) said.



Third Bodo Accord

1. This is the third Bodo accord to be signed in the last 27 years when the violent movement for a separate Bodoland state claimed hundreds of lives, destruction of public and private properties.
2. The first Bodo accord was signed with the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) in 1993, leading to the creation of a Bodoland Autonomous Council with limited political powers.
3. In 2003, the second Bodo accord was signed with the militant group Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), leading to formation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) with four districts of Assam -- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri -- called the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD).
4. The BTC has control over 30 subjects like education, forests, horticulture but no jurisdiction on the police, revenue and general administration departments, which are controlled by the Assam government. The BTC was formed under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution.
5. The demand for a separate state for the Bodos has been going on in Assam for about five decades and several Bodo overground and militant groups raising it leading to agitations, protests, violence and many deaths.

GSAT-30 SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED

India's "high power" communication satellite GSAT-30, aimed at providing high-quality television, telecommunications and broadcasting services, was successfully launched onboard Ariane 5 rocket from French Guiana on 17 January 2020. The mission team at the master control facility has already acquired the satellite and they will immediately complete the post launch operations.

What

1. The 3,357-kg satellite, which was deployed from the lower passenger position of Ariane-5 launch vehicle (VA 251) into geostationary transfer orbit (GTO), is configured on ISRO's enhanced I-3K Bus structure to provide communication services from geostationary orbit in C and Ku bands.
2. The satellite derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series, and is equipped with 12 C and 12 Ku band transponders.
3. GSAT-30 is to serve as a replacement to the "ageing" INSAT-4A spacecraft services with enhanced coverage. GSAT-30 has a unique configuration of providing flexible frequency segments and flexible coverage.
4. The satellite will provide communication services to Indian mainland and islands through Ku-band and wide coverage covering Gulf countries, a large number of Asian countries and Australia through C-band.
5. With a mission life of 15 years, GSAT-30 is an operational communication satellite for DTH, television uplink and VSAT services.
6. GSAT-30 will provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, stock-exchange, television uplinking and teleport services, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications.
7. The satellite will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications. One Ku-band beacon downlink signal is transmitted for ground-tracking purpose.
8. EUTELSAT KONNECT which was produced by Thales Alenia Space for Eutelsat was riding in the upper position of Ariane 5's payload arrangement, and was released first in the flight sequence at 27 minutes following liftoff.
9. A European communication satellite called EUTELSAT KONNECT was the co-passenger of GSAT-30.
10. ISRO in recent years has been taking the support of a cluster of mid-sized industries to speed up building routine spacecraft at its premises.

About GSAT 30

- ❖ Launch Mass - 3357 kg
- ❖ Mission Life - More than 15 years
- ❖ Launch Vehicle - Ariane-5 VA-251
- ❖ Type of Satellite - Communication
- ❖ Manufacturer - ISRO
- ❖ Owner - ISRO
- ❖ Application - Communication
- ❖ Orbit Type - GSO

INDIA IN DEMOCRACY INDEXES 2019

India slipped 10 places to 51st position in the 2019 Democracy Index's global ranking, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit, which cited "erosion of civil liberties" in the country as the primary cause for the downtrend. **India's overall score fell** from 7.23 in 2018 to 6.90 in the Index that provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for 165 independent states and two territories. On India, the report said, **the country dropped ten places in the Democracy Index's global ranking to 51st.**

The primary cause of the democratic regression was an erosion of civil liberties in the country.

What

1. The index is based on five categories -- electoral process and pluralism; the functioning of government; political participation; political culture; and civil liberties.
2. Based on their total score, the countries are classified as one of **four types of regimes**: “full **democracy**” (scores greater than 8); flawed democracy — scores greater than 6 and less than or equal to 8; hybrid regime — scores greater than 4 and less than or equal to 6; authoritarian regime — scores less than or equal to 4. India was included in the **“flawed democracy” category**.
3. Meanwhile, **China’s score fell to 2.26** in the 2019 index, and the country is now ranked 153rd, close to the bottom of the global rankings.
4. Over the past year discrimination against minorities, especially in the north-western region of Xinjiang, has intensified. Digital surveillance of the population continued apace in 2019, representing a further constraint on individual freedoms, the report said.
5. Among other emerging economies, Brazil was ranked 52nd with a score of 6.86, Russia stood at 134th with a score of 3.11.
6. Meanwhile, Pakistan was ranked 108th on the overall list with a score of 4.25, while Sri Lanka was at 69th place with a score of 6.27, Bangladesh (at 80th with 5.88 score).
7. The overall list was topped by Norway, followed by Iceland and Sweden. Other countries in the top 10 include New Zealand at fourth place, Finland (5th), Ireland (6th), Denmark (7th), Canada (8th), Australia (9th) and Switzerland (10th).
8. North Korea was at the bottom of the global ranking at 167th place.

Flashback

1. The twelfth edition of the Democracy Index finds that the average global score has fallen from 5.48 in 2018, to 5.44.
2. This is the worst average global score since The Economist Intelligence Unit first produced the Democracy Index in 2006.
3. Driven by sharp regressions in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, four out of the five categories that make up the global average score have deteriorated.
4. Although there were some dramatic downturns in the scores of certain countries, others have bucked the overall trend and registered impressive improvements.

INDIA IN SOCIAL MOBILITY INDEX

India has been ranked very low at 76th place out of 82 countries on a new Social Mobility Index compiled by the World Economic Forum, while Denmark has topped the charts. The report, released ahead of the 50th Annual Meeting of the WEF, also lists India among the five countries that stand to gain the most from a better social mobility score that seeks to measure parameters necessary for creating societies where every person has the same opportunity to fulfil his potential in life irrespective of socioeconomic background. Increasing social mobility, a key driver of income inequality, by 10 per cent would benefit social cohesion and boost the world’s economies by nearly 5 per cent by 2030, the WEF said. But, few economies have the right conditions to foster social mobility.

What

1. Measuring countries across five key dimensions distributed over 10 pillars health;

education (access, quality and equity); technology; work (opportunities, wages, conditions); and protections and institutions (social protection and inclusive institutions) shows that fair wages, social protection and lifelong learning are the biggest drag on social mobility globally.

2. In the case of India, it ranks 76th out of 82 economies. It ranks 41st in lifelong learning and 53rd in working conditions.
3. The Areas of improvement for India include social protection (76th) and fair wage distribution (79th).

4. The inaugural Social Mobility Report showed that across the Global Social Mobility Index, only a handful of nations across the 82 countries covered have put in place the right conditions to foster social mobility.

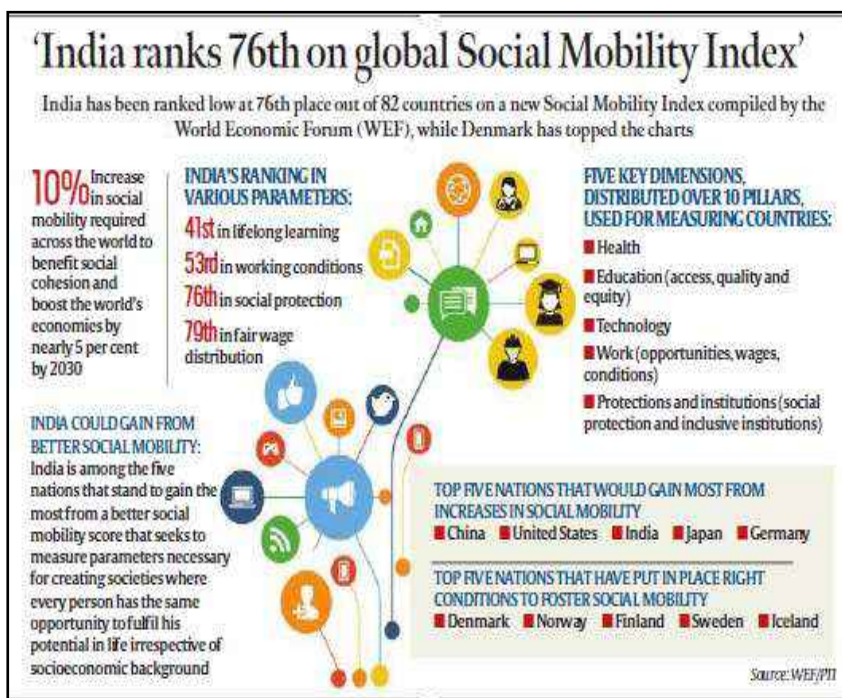
5. The most socially mobile societies in the world, according to the report's Global Social Mobility Index, are all European.

6. The Nordic nations hold the top five spots, led by Denmark in the first place (scoring 85 points), followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden (all above 83 points) and Iceland (82 points). Rounding out the top 10 are the Netherlands (6th), Switzerland (7th), Austria (8th), Belgium (9th) and Luxembourg (10th).

7. Among the G7 economies, Germany is the most socially mobile, ranking 11th with 78 points, followed by France in 12th position. Canada comes next (14th), followed by Japan (15th), the United Kingdom (21st), the United States (27th) and Italy (34th).

8. Among the world's large emerging economies, the Russian Federation is the most socially mobile of the BRICS grouping, ranking 39th, with a score of 64 points. Next is China (45th), followed by Brazil (60th), India (76th) and South Africa (77th).

9. The report also examines which economies stand to gain the most from increases in social mobility. The economy with the most to gain is China, whose economy could



What is social mobility?

1. Social mobility can be understood as the movement in personal circumstances **either "upwards" or "downwards"** of an individual in relation to those of their parents. In absolute terms, it is the ability of a child to experience a better life than their parents.
2. On the other hand, relative social mobility is an assessment of the impact of **socio-economic background on an individual's** outcomes in life.
3. It can be measured against a number of outcomes ranging from health to educational achievement and income.

grow by an extra USD 103 billion a year, or USD 1 trillion dollars over the decade.

INDIA IN GTCI 2020

India has moved up eight places to the 72nd position in the 2020 Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) that measures and ranks countries based on their ability to grow, attract and retain talent. Switzerland topped the list of 132 countries, followed by the US and Singapore. Although more could be done to improve the country's educational system (68th in Formal Education), India's key strength relates to growing (44th) talent, due to its levels of lifelong learning (40th) and access to growth opportunities (39th), the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) report noted.

What

1. The country's highest-ranked sub-pillar is employability, but the ability to match labour market demand and supply stands in contrast to the country's poor "mid-level skills", which result in a mediocre score in vocational and technical skills, the report said.

2. India's greatest challenge is to address its weak ability to attract and retain talent, where strengthening the role of minorities and women would raise the level of internal openness.

3. The GTCI report was launched by INSEAD, a partner and sponsor of the United Nation's Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) Tent in Davos, Switzerland on 22 January 2020.

4. Switzerland topped this year's ranking, followed by the United States, its highest position yet, while Singapore is the third most talent-competitive country.
5. Other countries in the top 10 include Sweden at the 4th position, Denmark (5th), the Netherlands (6th), Finland (7th), Luxembourg (8th), Norway (9th) and Australia (10th).
6. India's GTCI score and GDP per capita are both lower than the corresponding medians of its other emerging market economies such as BRICS - Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa. Thus, the country's talent competitiveness is in line with what would be expected given its income level. China was ranked at the 42nd place, Russia (48th), South Africa (70th) and Brazil (80th).
7. Report noted that the gap between high income, talent-rich nations and the rest of the world is widening. More than half of the population in the developing world lack basic digital skills.
8. This year's GTCI report explores how the development of artificial intelligence (AI) is not only changing the nature of work but also forcing a re-evaluation of workplace practices, corporate structures and innovation ecosystems.



9. This is the seventh edition of the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) report.
10. This new GTCI report focuses on Global Talent in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, following the path initially explored by the GTCI 2017 theme of Talent and Technology.

FEMBOSA IN DELHI

10th annual meeting of the Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) was organised by the Election Commission on 24 January 2020. India took over as Chair of the body for 2020. To mark the occasion, the EC organised an international conference on the theme 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity'. A New Delhi Resolution was unanimously adopted at the 10th FEMBoSA annual meeting by its seven members present.

What

1. The Work Plan for 2020 on 'Use of Technology in Elections' **calls for Members to** undertake projects and initiatives on various aspects of use of technology in elections and present a report on their experiences and challenges faced in this regard at the next FEMBoSA Meeting.
2. Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia(FEMBoSA) is a regional establishment to increase mutual cooperation in respect to the common interests of the SAARC's EMBs.
3. The objectives of the Forum are to promote contact among the EMBs of the SAARC countries; share experiences with a view to learning from each other and cooperate with one another in enhancing the capabilities of the EMBs towards conducting free and fair elections.
4. The Agenda of the annual meetings are aimed to hold discussions on important current topics relevant to election management and electoral process, giving special attention to the region and decisions being taken on the incoming chairperson of FEMBoSA and the hosting country of the next meeting.

Flashback

- ❖ FEMBoSA was established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies of SAARC countries in 2012.
- ❖ The last annual meeting of FEMBoSA was held in Dhaka in September 2018.
- ❖ Besides ECI, the other 7 members are EMBs from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- ❖ In 2010 for the first time Bangladesh Election Commission organized a regional meeting titled 'Meeting on Cooperation of Election Commissions in the South Asia Region', which was later called Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) as an institutionalized form.

INDIA TESTS NUCLEAR-MISSILE FROM UNDERSEA PAD

India tested its nuclear-capable K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), designed to have a strike range of 3,500 km, from an undersea platform in the shape of a submersible pontoon off the coast of Andhra Pradesh on 19 January 2020. Though there **was no official word on the test of the 'strategic missile', which will equip the country's nuclear-powered submarines**, sources said the solid-fuelled K-4 was test-fired for a range of **around 2,200 km "successfully" in the Bay of Bengal on 19 January 2020.**

What

1. Though K-4 has been tested a few times before, this was the first time it was fired for a long range. The problem of the missile tilting after emerging from under water has been

resolved, said a source.

2. **India's solitary nuclear**-powered submarine with ballistic missiles (SSBN), INS Arihant, is currently armed with K-15 missiles with a strike range of 750 km.
3. The Navy also operates another nuclear-powered submarine, INS Chakra, acquired on a 10-year lease from Russia, but it does not have nuclear-tipped missiles because of international treaties.
4. INS Arihant had become fully operational in November 2018 after completing its **first 'deterrence patrol' to complete the country's long-awaited nuclear triad** or the capability to fire nuclear weapons from land, air and sea.
5. India for long has had the land-based Agni missiles, with the over 5,000 km Agni-V inter-continental ballistic missile now in the process of being inducted, and fighter jets jury-rigged to deliver nuclear weapons.
6. **But INS Arihant gives the country's nuclear deterrence posture much more credibility** since SSBNs are the most secure, survivable and potent platforms for retaliatory strikes.
7. **Though INS Arihant's K-15** missiles are currently dwarfed by the well over 5,000 km range SLBMs present with the US, Russia and China, the K-4 missiles will add much more teeth to the follow-on submarines.
8. The K-4 missiles are to be followed by the K-5 and K-6 missiles in the 5,000 to 6,000 km range. The 6,000-tonne INS Arihant, which is propelled by an 83 MW pressurised light-water reactor at its core is to be followed by INS Arighat, which was launched in 2017.

SC REJECTS AGR REVIEW PLEA

In a blow to the telecom industry facing severe financial stress, the Supreme Court on 16 January 2020 rejected the review petitions moved by Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices against its October 2019 order on payment of dues linked to adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

What

1. A three-judge bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra, S A Nazeer and M R Shah, in an in-chamber hearing on 16 January 2020, did not find merit in the review plea and dismissed it. A curative plea will be another attempt for the telcos to find relief after the dismissal of a review petition.
2. The genesis of the dispute between the industry and DoT was the definition of AGR, which is the revenue used to calculate the licence fee and spectrum charges paid by telecom companies to the government.
3. In the October 2019 order, the Supreme Court upheld the government definition of AGR, implying non-core revenues such as rent, dividend and interest would also be part of the calculation.
4. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) had in 2005 filed the first case, **challenging the government's definition on calculation of AGR.**
5. It had contended that the components of AGR, which that the government was trying to include, were contrary to the Telegraph Act and the recommendations made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
6. While the industry has already paid 85 per cent of the demand raised by the DoT, the remaining 15 per cent has stayed disputed for a very long time with the mobile companies getting favourable judgments in various legal forums, including Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT), High Courts and even Supreme Court.

What is it?

1. The telecom sector was liberalised under the National Telecom Policy, 1994 after which licenses were issued to companies in return for a fixed license fee.
2. To provide relief from the steep fixed license fee, the government in 1999 gave an option to the licensees to migrate to the revenue sharing fee model.
3. Under this, mobile telephone operators were required to share a percentage of their AGR with the government as annual license fee (LF) and spectrum usage charges (SUC). License agreements between the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the telecom companies define the gross revenues of the latter.
4. AGR is then computed after allowing for certain deductions spelt out in these license agreements. The LF and SUC were set at 8 per cent and between 3-5 per cent of AGR respectively, based on the agreement.
5. The dispute between DoT and the mobile operators was mainly on the definition of AGR. The DoT argued that AGR includes all revenues (before discounts) from both telecom and non-telecom services.
6. The companies claimed that AGR should comprise just the revenue accrued from core services and not dividend, interest income or profit on sale of any investment or fixed assets.
7. In 2005, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) challenged the **government's definition for AGR calculation.**
8. In 2015, the TDSAT (Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal) stayed the case in favour of telecom companies and held that AGR includes all receipts except capital receipts and revenue from non-core sources such as rent, profit on the sale of fixed assets, dividend, interest and miscellaneous income.
9. However, **setting aside TDSAT's order, Supreme Court on October 24, 2019 upheld the definition of AGR as stipulated by the DoT.**

DAMAN AS HEADQUARTERS OF THE MERGED UT

The Centre on 22 January 2020 designated Daman as the headquarters of the merged Union Territories of Daman & Diu, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Central government has also approved amendments or extension or repeal in the legislation dealing with the Goods and Services Tax (GST), Value Added Tax (VAT) and State Excise. The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

What

1. **These amendments will lead to 'Minimum Government Maximum Governance'** by way of having common taxation authorities, better delivery of services to the citizens by reducing duplication of work and improving administrative efficiency.
2. These will help in bringing more uniformity in laws relating to GST, VAT and State Excise and it will also help to avoid any legal complications in the levy and collection of GST Tax, VAT, State Excise, including recovery of arrears.
3. Moreover, the said amendments not only bring uniformity in taxation laws but also strengthen the system of laws, said the statement.
4. The statement said Daman has been designated as the Headquarters of UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu in view of the merger of the two UTs on January 26, 2020.
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 bifurcation into two UTs.
6. The country currently has nine UTs after the creation of the UTs of Jammu and

Kashmir, and Ladakh.

7. However, with the merger of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the number of UTs will come down to eight.

BRU TRIBALS PERMANENTLY SETTLED

More than 30,000 displaced Bru tribals from Mizoram, who have been living as refugees in Tripura since 1997, will permanently settle in Tripura and a tripartite agreement was signed in this effect on 16 January 2020. The agreement was signed by representatives of Bru and the central and Mizoram and governments in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi. Under the pact, over 30,000 Bru tribals will live in Tripura permanently.

What

1. The Bru tribals have been staying in Tripura in different relief camps after they fled Mizoram in 1997 following ethnic clashes between Bru and Mizo communities.
2. An agreement signed in July 2018 for repatriation of the Bru tribals to Mizoram did not materialise as majority of the community members refused to go back to Mizoram. So far, only 328 families have returned and settled in Mizoram.
3. A 23-year-old problem, which has been lingering for so long, has reached its logical conclusion. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have been solving one after another complicated problem.
4. Under the pact, Rs 4 lakh will be given to each Bru family in a fixed deposit account, Rs 5,000 per month for two years, a plot of land in Tripura and ration for two years. For all such assistance, the central government will provide Rs 600 crore.
5. The Bru people, who have been living in sub-human conditions in different camps, can now live in their own homes permanently. They will enjoy equal rights of any Indian living in Tripura with voting rights. They will now live honourably.

PREGNANCY TERMINATION BILL GETS NOD

The Union Cabinet on 29 January 2020 approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020, to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971. It will be introduced in the ensuing session of Parliament. According to a release, the proposed amendment seeks to enhance the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women that will be defined in the amendments to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Rules and will include 'vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, minors) etc.

What

1. The upper gestation limit will not apply to cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by the Medical Board. Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force, the release said.
2. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is for expanding access of women to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian or social grounds.
3. Addressing the media after the Cabinet meeting, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said the amendment to the ACT would ensure a safe termination of pregnancies and also give women reproductive rights over their bodies.
4. The extension to 24 weeks will also help victims of rape, girls with disabilities as well as minors, who may not realise they are pregnant until later.
5. In a progressive reform and giving reproductive rights to women the limit of 20 weeks of

medical termination of pregnancy has been increased to 24 weeks.

6. This is important because in first 5 months there are cases where the girl concerned **doesn't realise and has to go to court. This was discussed with** various stakeholders. This will reduce maternal mortality.

INTERNATIONAL

BREXIT DEAL CLEARED BY EU

Britain's departure from the European Union was backed by European lawmakers on 29 January 2020, after a debate that mixed warm words of love with hard-headed warnings to the country not to seek too many concessions during upcoming trade talks on a future relationship. The European Parliament overwhelmingly approved Britain's departure terms from the EU - the final major decision in the four-year Brexit saga. The vote was 621 to 49 in favor of the Brexit deal that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson negotiated with the other 27 EU leaders in the fall of last year.

What

1. While backing Britain's departure in the wake of the country's vote to leave in a referendum in June 2016, EU countries are already preparing for the possibility that talks on a new trade deal with Britain could collapse by the end of the year, and no-deal contingency planning for a chaotic end to the transition period is necessary.
2. After Britain's departure on 31 January 2020, the U.K. will remain within the EU's economic arrangements until the end of the year though it won't have a say in policy as it will not be a member of the EU anymore.
3. Britain is the first country to leave the EU and for many in Europe its official departure is a moment of enormous sadness and reduces the number in the bloc to 27.
4. Legislators approved the withdrawal agreement that will end the 47-year membership of Britain. At the same time, the vote cut the 73 U.K. parliamentarians from the 751-seat legislature where die-hard Brexiteers have been a disruptive force for years.
5. The EU has said such a timespan is far too short and fears remain that a chaotic exit, averted this week, might still happen at the end of the year if the transition ends without any agreement in place.

What is Brexit?

1. Brexit - British exit - refers to the UK leaving the EU.
2. The EU is an economic and political union involving 28 European countries. It allows free trade and free movement of people, to live and work in whichever country they choose.
3. The UK joined in 1973 (when it was known as the European Economic Community). If the UK leaves, it would be the first member state to withdraw from the EU.

WEST ASIA PEACE PLAN

The West Asia peace plan unveiled by U.S. President Donald Trump on 28 January 2020 seeks to give the Israelis what they have long wanted — an expansive state with Jerusalem as its “undivided capital” and **tight security control over a future Palestinian** state. With his plan, Mr. Trump is actually pushing to revive the stalled two-state talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but on his own terms. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had earlier spoken against the two-state solution, has accepted the Trump plan, while appearing beside the President in the White House. The Palestinians were absent.

What's the plan?

1. The Trump plan seeks to address most of the contentious issues in the conflict such as the border of Israel, status of Palestinian refugees, Jewish settlements on the West Bank, land swap between Israel and Palestine, **Israel's security concerns** and the status of the city of Jerusalem.
2. However, the solutions Mr. Trump has proposed to almost all of these issues favour the Israeli positions. For example, Israel would be allowed to annex the Jewish settlements on the West Bank as well as the Jordan Valley.
3. The Palestinian refugees, who were forced out from their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed the declaration of the state of Israel in the historic Palestine, would not be allowed to return. They could move to the future Palestinian state, be integrated into the host countries or settled in other regional countries.
4. **Jerusalem, perhaps the most contentious issue, would be “the undivided capital” of Israel**, with Palestine gaining its capital in the east of the city — beyond the security border Israel has already built.
5. In return, Israel would freeze further settlement activities on the West Bank for four years — the time for negotiations. During this period, the Palestinian Authority should dismiss its current complaints at the International Criminal Court against Israel and refrain itself from taking further actions.
6. **It should also crack down on “terrorist” groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.** Mr. Trump has also proposed \$50 billion in investment over 10 years should Palestine accept the proposals.
7. In the final settlement, Palestine would get control over more land than what it currently controls (According to the Oslo Accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas and only one of them is under the direct control of the Palestinian Authority).
8. The plan proposes some land swap for the Israeli annexation of the West Bank Jewish settlements. It seeks to enlarge Gaza and connect the strip with the West Bank through a tunnel. The Arab towns in the southeast of Israel, which are close to Gaza, could become part of a future Palestinian state.

EU, 16 WTO MEMBERS SIGN PACT

The European Union and 16 WTO members including China and Australia on 24 January 2020 signed a pact to develop a multi-party interim appeal arrangement. The arrangement, signed on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting, will allow the participating WTO members to preserve a functioning and two-step dispute settlement system at the World Trade Organization (WTO). This initiative was launched in mid-December 2019 by the EU and a number of other WTO members following the effective paralysis of the WTO Appellate Body due to the blockage of new appointments since 2017.

What

1. EU Commissioner for Trade Phil Hogan said: This statement testifies to the high importance that the EU and the participating WTO members attach to retaining a two-step dispute settlement process in WTO trade matters.
2. The multiparty appeal arbitration arrangement will guarantee that the participating WTO members continue to have access to a binding, impartial and high-quality dispute settlement system among them.
3. The multi-party interim arrangement will be based on Article 25 of the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU).
4. It will secure the participating WTO members (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the European Union, Guatemala, Republic of Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Singapore, Switzerland, and Uruguay) an effective and

binding dispute settlement process for potential trade disputes among them.

5. The arrangement is a contingency measure and it will only apply until the WTO Appellate Body becomes operational again.
6. The EU believes that an independent and impartial appeal stage, giving the necessary guarantees of rulings of the highest quality, must continue to be one of the essential features of the WTO dispute settlement system.
7. The joined statement by the 17 signatories said, "We, the Ministers of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, European Union, Guatemala, Republic of Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Singapore, Switzerland, Uruguay, remain committed to work with the whole WTO membership to find a lasting improvement to the situation relating to the WTO Appellate Body.
8. The signatories said they will work towards putting in place contingency measures that would allow for appeals of WTO panel reports in disputes among themselves, in the form of a multi-party interim appeal arrangement based on Article 25 of the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding.
9. This would be in place only and until a reformed WTO Appellate Body becomes fully operational. The arrangement will be open to any WTO Member willing to join it.

The Dispute Settlement Understanding

1. The current dispute settlement system was created as part of the WTO Agreement during the Uruguay Round.
2. It is embodied in the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes, commonly referred to as the Dispute Settlement **Understanding and abbreviated "DSU"** (referred to as such in this guide).
3. The DSU, which constitutes Annex 2 of the WTO Agreement, sets out the procedures **and rules that define today's dispute settlement system.**
4. It should however be noted that, to a large degree, the current dispute settlement system is the result of the evolution of rules, procedures and practices developed over almost half a century under the GATT 1947.

INDIA, US AGREE TO RESOLVE DISPUTE

India and the US have agreed to resolve amicably a dispute over American import duties on certain Indian steel products, wherein Washington is yet to fully comply with the WTO ruling. The WTO dispute resolution body has ruled against the US in this case stating that the high duty imposed by America on certain hot-rolled carbon steel flat products from India was inconsistent with various provisions of the WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. The US agreed to resolve the matter amicably as the appellate body of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has become dysfunctional since last month.

What

1. America has failed to fully comply with a six-year-old ruling of the WTO's dispute panel over import duties on certain Indian steel products which has endorsed India's belief that not only the practices followed by the US, the law itself violates WTO agreements.
2. The compliance panel has found that the US has not complied with the rulings and recommendations of the dispute panel.
3. India has dragged the US in WTO in 2012, alleging that Washington's move to impose high duties on imports of certain Indian steel products are global trade rules.
4. In December 2014, the WTO dispute panel had ruled against the US imposing high countervailing duties on imports of certain Indian steel products.
5. Later the WTO's appellate body too ruled that the high duties imposed by the US were

- inconsistent with various provisions of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.
6. Then in June 2017, India again moved the WTO alleging that America has not fully complied with those rulings.
 7. India had stated that a reasonable period of time for the US to comply with the WTO's ruling had expired on April 18, 2016.
 8. According to a communication of the WTO, both the countries "continue to engage in good faith discussions to seek a positive solution to this dispute".
 9. It said that on December 18, 2019, the US notified the Dispute Settlement Body of its decision to appeal the report by the compliance panel.
 10. The US did not file a notice of appeal or an appellant submission because at this time no division of the appellate body can be established to hear this appeal.
 11. It may be noted that it is the US which has not been agreeing to the appointment of WTO's appellate body members.
 12. At present, only one member is there in the body whereas there should be seven and the quorum required is at least three to hear appeals.

INDIA & BRAZIL AGREE TO RESOLVE SUGAR SUBSIDIES ISSUE

India and Brazil have both agreed to address the critical issue of sugarcane subsidies and pricing policies through bilateral consultations. Brazil, last February filed a World Trade Organisation (WTO) dispute related to the alleged domestic support provided by India in favour of agricultural producers of sugarcane and sugar. It also raised the issue regarding the export subsidies measures. Following which in July 2019, besides Brazil, Australia and Guatemala also initiated dispute proceedings, citing **India's policies to support sugarcane farmers not in compliance with WTO rules and are distorting global trade**. This led to WTO setting up a dispute settlement panel with the aim to review Indian subsidies.

What

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro both discussed the issue bilaterally and have agreed to address the issue through consultations at bilateral level.
2. Though both leaders have agreed to resolve the issue bilaterally, according to **diplomatic sources "It not clear if Brazil is going to withdraw its formal complaint raised at the WTO."**
3. India has implemented protective policies for sugarcane farmers and sugar mill owners since 2011. These practices include the setting of a minimum buying price for sugarcane farmers and a minimum selling point for sugarcane mill owners.
4. These minimum price points were increased in the financial year 2018-19. Australia had gone to the WTO in 2011 and was later supported by Brazil and Guatemala in its claims that such protective policies influence in the price of sugar in international markets, driving down the sugar prices and therefore driving down the profits.
5. Since, the increase in protective price points, the Brazilian farmers who believe that these policies have led to a global decline in sugar prices have appealed to the WTO again citing Indian protective policies as a violation of WTO rules and regulations.
6. Brazil itself has flexi- sugar mills that are equipped to produce an ethanol-based biofuel that is derived from sugarcanes; a practice instituted after the 1973 oil shock under the PROALCOOL programme.
7. So sugar mills in Brazil tend to produce sugar or bio-fuel based on market conditions and comparative advantage. Therefore the Brazilian argument against Indian protective policies and self-contradictory.

US-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

US President Donald Trump has formally signed a new trade pact with Mexico and Canada, bringing his campaign promises to replace the three countries' existing deal closer to fruition. The US Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA) is set to replace the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta). Mr Trump has described Nafta as America's "worst" deal and blamed it for a decline in manufacturing jobs. Canada has yet to ratify the pact but is expected to do so.

What

1. The three countries announced they had reached a deal in 2018 after more than a year of negotiation. The accord has been working its way through the legislatures of the three countries ever since.
2. In the US, Democrats, who control the House of Representatives, insisted on changes - including stronger labour rules - before voting in support of the measure. Those revisions were approved late last year.
3. Many of the original Nafta provisions will continue under the new accord, which governs more than \$1tr in annual trade between the three countries. It also sets new terms for digital trade and increases US access to Canada's dairy market.
4. The most eye-catching changes concern new rules for car companies, which are aimed at boosting production in the US.
5. The new deal requires a higher percentage of vehicles to be made in North America to qualify for tariff-free treatment. It also requires that a certain percentage of each vehicle be made by workers making at least \$16 an hour.
6. The US will provide more than \$27m in grants to Mexico to help enforce labour laws and address issues such as child workers in the agricultural sector, the Department of Labour announced.

ECONOMY

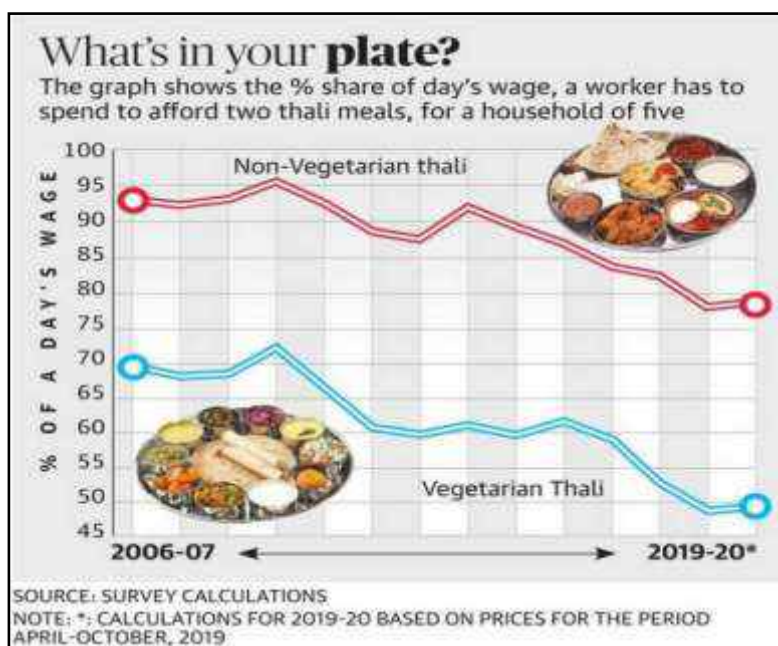
ECONOMIC SURVEY OF INDIA 2019-20

The Union Finance minister on 31 January 2020 tabled the Economic Survey 2019-20 in Parliament.

Key Highlights of Economic Survey 2019-20

Thalis more affordable for Indians now!

1. The Economic Survey said that affordability of Thalīs vis-à-vis a day's pay of a worker has improved over time, indicating improved welfare of the common person.
2. The Economic Survey 2019-20 said that affordability of vegetarian Thalīs improved 29 per cent from 2006-07 to 2019-20 while that for non-vegetarian Thalīs by 18 per cent.



More new firms created

1. The Economic Survey highlighted that new firm creation in India has increased dramatically since 2014.
2. There has been 12.2 % cumulative annual growth rate of new firms in the formal sector during 2014-18, compared to 3.8 % during 2006-2014.
3. About 1.24 lakh new firms created in 2018, an increase of about 80 % from about 70,000 in 2014.

PMAY- Gramin

1. The Survey noted, the two Schemes, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana- Gramin (PMAY-G) and Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana- Urban (PMAY-U), seek to achieve the target of housing for all by 2022.
2. Under PMAY-G, the number of houses completed in a year increased by more than four times, from 11.95 lakh in 2014-15 to 47.33 lakh in 2018-19, states the Survey.

Infrastructure Investment

1. The Survey said that to achieve GDP of USD 5 trillion by 2024 – 2025, India needs to spend about USD 1.4 trillion (Rs.100 lakh crore) over these years on infrastructure so that lack of infrastructure does not become a constraint to the growth of Indian economy.
2. NIP is expected to enable well prepared infrastructure projects that will create jobs, improve ease of living and provide equitable access for infrastructure for all thereby making growth more inclusive.

Livestock Sector

1. The Survey said that Livestock income has become an important secondary source of income for millions of rural families and has assumed an important role in **achieving the goal of doubling farmers' income**.
2. Livestock sector has been growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7.9 percent during the last five years.

Greening India!

1. The Survey said that despite ongoing developmental efforts, forest and tree cover are increasing considerably.
2. The forest and tree cover have reached 80.73 million hectares which is 24.56 per cent of the geographical area of the country.

3. The Survey further highlighted that the States/UTs showing gain in forest cover are Karnataka (1,025 sq. km), Andhra Pradesh (990 sq. km) and Jammu & Kashmir (371 sq. km) whereas those showing loss in forest cover include Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.



4. In the Forest Report 2019, the total carbon stock in forest is estimated as 7,124.6 million tons, showing an increase of 42.6 million tons as compared to the last assessment in 2017.

Ayushman Bharat and Health

1. **Ayushman Bharat, the world's biggest health care Scheme** to improve access to health and delivery of health services at a massive scale, has set up 28,005 Health & Wellness Centres as on 14th January 2020.
2. To promote preventive healthcare, one and a half lakh Ayushman Bharat- Health and Wellness Centres are proposed to be set up by 2022.
3. As per the latest National Health Accounts 2016-17, the out of pocket expenditure (OoPE) on health as a percentage of total health expenditure declined from 64.2 per cent in 2013-14 to 58.7 per cent in 2016-17, observed the Economic Survey.

Jobs created in Rural and Urban Areas

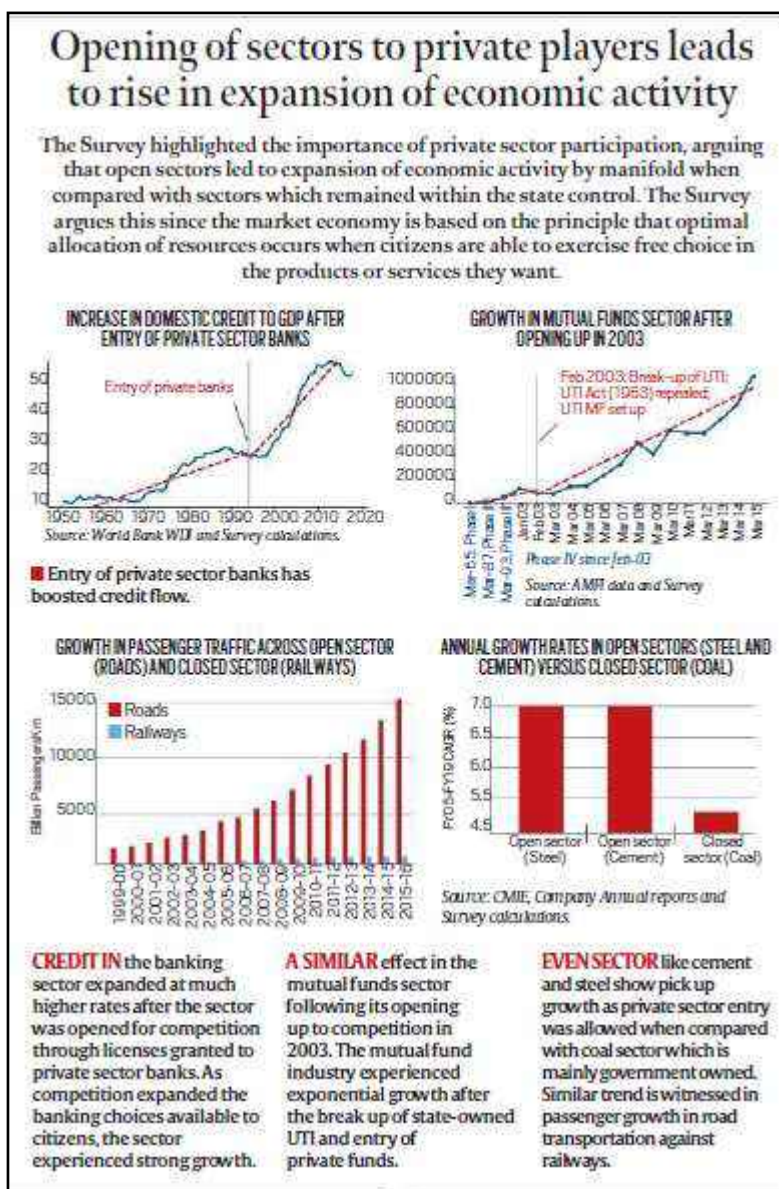
1. The Survey said that along with efforts for generating additional employment, special focus has been on improving the quality of jobs and formalisation of the economy, notes the Economic Survey.
2. The share of regular wage/salaried employees has increased by 5 percentage points from 18 per cent in 2011-12 to 23 per cent in 2017-18.
3. In absolute terms, there was a significant jump of around 2.62 crore new jobs with 1.21 crore in rural areas and 1.39 crore in urban areas in this category.

Green Bond Market

1. Survey observed that India has the Second largest Emerging Green Bond Market after China.
2. The SBI entered the market with a US\$650 million Certified Climate Bond. India also joined International Platform on Sustainable Finance (IPSF) in 2019 to scale up the environmentally sustainable investments.

All Urban Areas of 35 States/UTs Declared Open Defecation Free

1. Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) was launched in 2014 with twin objectives of ensuring 100 percent scientific solid waste management and making urban India ODF to achieve total environmental improvement.
2. All Urban areas of 35 States/UTs have become ODF and percentage of waste



processing rose from around 18 percent to 60 percent.

Services Sector Sees 33 Per Cent Jump in Gross FDI

1. Growing in its significance, the Services Sector accounted for about 55percent of the economy and Gross Value Added (GVA) growth, two-thirds of total FDI inflows into India and about 38percent of the total exports.
2. This was emphasized by the Economic Survey 2019-20, tabled in the Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman.
3. **The sector's share now exceeds 50 per cent of the Gross State Value Added in 15 out of the 33 states and UTs, the Survey further noted.**

Improvement in Space Sector

1. **India's space programme** has grown exponentially since its modest beginnings five decades ago, moving from simple mapping services to many more uses currently.
2. **Even though India's spending is less compared to others**, ISRO has launched around 5-7 satellites per year in recent years with almost no failures.

Other Highlights of Economic Survey 2019-20

1. GDP growth pegged at 6-6.5 per cent in fiscal year starting April 1, up from 5 per cent in current fiscal
2. Fiscal deficit target for current fiscal may need to be relaxed to revive growth
3. Uptick in growth projected in second half of current fiscal based on 10 factors including higher FDI flows, build up of demand pressure, positive GST revenue growth
4. Survey asks government to deliver expeditiously on reforms to revive growth
5. Ethical wealth creation key to India becoming USD 5 trillion economy by 2025
6. Share of formal employment increased from 17.9 per cent in 2011 -12 to 22.8 per cent in 2017-18 reflecting formalisation in the economy
7. Theme of Survey is wealth creation, promotion of pro-business policies, strengthening of trust in the economy
8. To achieve GDP of USD 5 trillion by 2024-25, India needs to spend about USD 1.4 trillion over these years on infrastructure
9. 2.62 crore new jobs created in rural, urban areas between 2011-12 and 2017-18 among regular wage/salaried employees
10. 8 per cent increase in regular employment of women in 2017-18 over 2011-12
11. Excessive government intervention in markets, especially when the market can do the job of enhancing citizens welfare perfectly well, stifles economic freedom
12. Debt waivers disrupt the credit culture, reduces formal credit to same farmers
13. Suggests government to systematically examine areas where it needlessly intervenes and undermines markets
14. Calls for improving governance in public sector banks, more disclosures to build trust
15. Calls for measures to make it easier to start a new business, register property, pay taxes, enforce contracts
16. Easing of crude prices lowers current account deficit; imports contract more sharply than exports in first half of current fiscal
17. Declining inflation from 3.2 per cent in April 2019 to 2.6 per cent in December 2019, reflecting weakening demand pressure in the economy
18. GST collections grew by 4.1 per cent for the centre during April-November 2019.

INDIA AMONG TOP 10 FDI RECIPIENTS

India was among the top 10 recipients of Foreign Direct Investment in 2019, attracting \$49 billion in inflows, a 16 per cent increase from the previous year, driving the FDI growth in South Asia, according to a UN report released. The Global Investment Trend Monitor report has compiled by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) states that the global foreign direct investment remained flat in 2019 at \$1.39 trillion, a 1 per cent decline from a revised \$1.41 trillion in 2018. This is against the backdrop of weaker macroeconomic performance and policy uncertainty for investors, including trade tensions.

What

1. India attracted an estimated \$49 billion of FDI in 2019, a 16 per cent increase from the \$42 billion recorded in 2018.
2. The FDI flows to developed countries remained at a historically low level, decreasing by a further 6 per cent to an estimated \$643 billion.
3. The FDI to the European Union (EU) fell by 15 per cent to \$305 billion, while there was zero-growth of flows to the United States, which received \$251 billion FDI in 2019, as compared to \$254 billion in 2018, the report said.
4. Despite this, the United States remained the largest recipient of FDI, followed by China with flows of \$140 billion and Singapore with \$110 billion.
5. China also saw zero-growth in FDI inflows. Its FDI inflows in 2018 were \$139 billion and stood at \$140 billion in 2019. The FDI in the UK was down 6 per cent as Brexit unfolded.
6. The report added that cross-border M&As decreased by 40 per cent in 2019 to \$490 billion – the lowest level since 2014.
7. Slowed down by sluggish Eurozone growth and Brexit, European M&A sales halved to \$190 billion. Deals targeting United States companies remained significant – accounting for 31 per cent of total M&As.
8. The fall in global cross-border M&As sales was deepest in the services sector (a 56 per cent decline to \$207 billion), followed by manufacturing (a 19 per cent decline to \$249 billion) and primary sector (14 per cent decline to \$34 billion), the report said.
9. In particular, sales of assets related to financial and insurance activities and chemicals fell sharply. The decline in M&A values was driven also by a lower number of megadeals. In 2019, there were 30 megadeals above \$5 billion compared to 39 in 2018.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

'VYOMMITRA' IN GAGANYAAN

Indian space agency ISRO will send a half-humanoid female into space as part of its human space mission programme Gaganyaan. The robot -- Vyommitra -- was unveiled by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in Bengaluru. It is called half-humanoid since it does not have legs, though it can bend forward and sideways.

What

1. According to ISRO, Vyommitra can recognise humans and answer questions as well as carry out some experiments. It can monitor biological parameters and operate switch panels and life-support activities. Vyommitra can also converse with astronauts.
2. ISRO Chairman K.Sivan had said that two test space missions would be carried out before sending three Indian astronauts into space sometime in 2022.
3. The test missions expected by this year-end and mid-2021 will validate ISRO's crew module and its systems.

4. Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force (IAF) is shortlisting four astronauts to get trained in Russia for the purpose.
5. The Indian space agency has already developed systems for space capsule re-entry, recovery and crew escape.
6. Previously, Isro unveiled prototypes of the spacesuits and the crew capsule that will be used for the Gaganyaan mission.
7. The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III rocket, which will fly the astronauts to space, has already been developed and has proven its mettle.
8. Isro aims to launch the manned spaceflight mission by 2022. Before that, the space agency will launch two unmanned missions -- one in December this year and another in June 2021.
9. These will demonstration test flight aimed at proving that Isro can fly humans to space and at testing the various systems that will be part of the final manned space mission.
10. The humanoid Vyommित्रा will be part of both the unmanned spaceflights during which she will mimic crew activity.

WHO ENDORSES TECH DEVELOPED BY INDIAN

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has endorsed a technology developed by Indian scientists to detect tuberculosis and multi-drug resistant TB in view of its high diagnostic accuracy, health ministry officials said. **The WHO's Global TB Programme has included TrueNat TB test — a new molecular test that detects tuberculosis as well as resistance to the drug Rifampicin in about 90 minutes — in its rapid communication document on molecular investigative procedure in laboratory medicine and pharmacology.**

What

1. According to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Director General Dr Balram Bhargava, the endorsement of the technology by WHO would enable low and middle-income countries to procure TrueNat for tuberculosis and Rifampicin resistance, thus supporting elimination of the disease in developing countries.
2. The TrueNat assay kit is highly cost-effective compared to GeneXpert and can be used in peripheral centres without an air conditioned laboratory as it runs on battery which can be solar powered.
3. The kit works in two steps. In the first step, the DNA is extracted from the sputum and the second stage involves detection of tuberculosis and multi-drug resistant TB.
4. The most promising kits were selected by an expert group and those were subjected to a double-blind validation in comparison to standard tests at four national reference laboratories of the country.
5. This was taken up by National TB Elimination Programme after recommendations from ICMR. As part of **WHO's pre-qualification process**, ICMR funded Indian centres of the FIND-coordinated multi-central, prospective field evaluation study in four countries — India, Ethiopia, Peru and Papua-New Guinea.

INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY OVER 2019 NCOV

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on 30 January 2020 declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The WHO declares a Public Health Emergency of International Concern when there is "an extraordinary event which is determined... to constitute a public health risk to other **States through the international spread of disease.**"

What

1. The last time WHO declared a global health emergency was in 2019 for the Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo that killed more than 2,000 people.

2. The agency also declared global emergencies for the 2016 Zika virus, the 2009 H1N1 swine flu, and the 2014 polio and Ebola outbreaks.
3. The WHO Committee agreed that the novel coronavirus outbreak now meets the criteria for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
4. The WHO has now noted that it expected that further international exportation of cases may appear in any country.

What does this entail?

1. All countries should be prepared for containment, including active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of onward spread of 2019-nCoV infection, and to share full data with WHO.
2. Countries are reminded that they are legally required to share information with WHO under the IHR.
3. Any detection of 2019-nCoV in an animal (including information about the species, diagnostic tests, and relevant epidemiological information) should be reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) as an emerging disease.
4. Countries should place particular emphasis on reducing human infection, prevention of secondary transmission and international spread, and contributing to the international response through multi-sectoral communication and collaboration and active participation in increasing knowledge on the virus and the disease, as well as advancing research.
5. The WHO Committee does not recommend any travel or trade restrictions based on the current information available.
6. Countries must inform WHO about any travel measures taken. Countries are cautioned against actions that promote stigma or discrimination, in line with the principles of Article 3 of the IHR.
7. The WHO Committee has asked the Director-General to provide further advice on these matters and, if necessary, to make new case-by-case recommendations, in view of this rapidly evolving situation.

What is Coronavirus

1. Coronavirus is an umbrella term for viruses that cause illness ranging from common cold to diseases such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
2. 2019-nCoV is a new strain of CoV, discovered in 2019 which is why it's written as 2019-nCoV.
3. It's called novel since this strain has previously not been detected in humans.
4. It was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China — which is why it's also called the Wuhan virus — and brought to WHO's notice on December 31, 2019 after cases of pneumonia caused by unknown reasons came to light.

ANTIBIOTIC AGAINST MULTI-DRUG RESISTANT BACTERIA

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee have discovered a novel compound that can effectively kill a multitude of notorious antibiotic resistant bacteria, the premier engineering institute said. In a new study published in the journal, **'Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy'**, IIT Roorkee researchers screened a library of 11,000 compounds against the Gram negative bacteria, Escherichia coli and discovered 30 novel potent antibacterials.

What

1. Antibiotics have been considered as the cornerstones of both basic and modern medicine and it is difficult to envisage a world without them. However, injudicious over

- the counter sales and excessive use and abuse of antibiotics in poultry, livestock and agriculture has given rise to the global problem of antibiotic resistance.
2. With the ever-increasing rise in drug resistant superbugs and lack of effective antibiotics against them, it has become imperative to search for novel antibacterial molecules.
 3. Moreover, Gram negative bacterial pathogens present a major threat owing to their outer membrane permeability barrier and presence of efflux pumps that may act as tiny motors to flush antibiotics out of the bacterial cells.
 4. The research team led by Dr Ranjana Pathania, Associate Professor at the Department of Biotechnology, IIT Roorkee identified a **small molecule “IITR06144”** that can kill highly multidrug resistant strains of Escherichia coli, Acinetobacter baumannii, Klebsiella pneumonia as well as Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
 5. The molecule also showed promising activity against the diarrhoea causing bacteria, Clostridium difficile and the wound pathogen, Staphylococcus aureus.
 6. The aim of this study was to evaluate the biological properties of a small molecule, IITR06144, identified in a phenotypic screen against the Gram negative model organism Escherichia coli.
 7. The team compared the properties of IITR06144 with structurally analogous antibiotics Nitrofurantoin and Furazolidone, which are commonly administered in clinics for the treatment of urinary tract infections (UTIs) and intestinal ailments respectively.

FIRST DIGITAL CURRENCY GOVERNANCE

The World Economic Forum on 25 January 2020 announced the first global consortium focused on designing a framework for the governance of digital currencies, including stablecoins. The Global Consortium for Digital Currency Governance will aim to increase access to the financial system through innovative policy solutions that are inclusive and interoperable. The opportunities for financial inclusion will only be unlocked if the space is regulated properly and includes public-private cooperation across developed and high growth markets, the WEF said while announcing the new initiative on the last day of its 50th annual meeting after extensive consultation with the global community.

What

1. Digital currencies are often cited as a tool for financial inclusion, but this opportunity can only be realized when paired with good governance.
2. This is the first initiative to bring together leading companies, financial institutions, government representatives, technical experts, academics, international organizations, NGOs and members of the Forum's communities on a global level.
3. To tackle the challenge ahead, an international, multi-stakeholder approach with the public and private sectors working alongside civil society is needed.
4. This consortium will focus on solutions for a fragmented

About the Annual Meeting 2020

1. The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2020 took place from 21 to 24 January 2020 in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.
2. The meeting brings together more than 3,000 global leaders from politics, government, civil society, academia, the arts and culture as well as the media.
3. Convening under the theme, Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World, participants will focus on defining new models for building sustainable and inclusive societies in a plurilateral world.

regulatory system. Efficiency, speed, interoperability, inclusivity and transparency will be at the heart of this initiative.

5. It will call for innovative regulatory approaches to achieve these goals and build trust. A set of guiding principles will be co-designed to support public and private actors exploring the opportunities that digital currencies present.
6. Governance is the core pillar of any form of digital currency. It is critical that any framework on digital currencies ensures security, efficiency and legitimacy of payments while ensuring fair and open competition.
7. Properly regulated digital currency can be used for cheaper and faster cross-border payments, financial inclusion, and rooting out illicit finance.
8. This initiative builds on work done by the Forum over the past year, convening a global community of central banks to co-design a policy framework for the adoption of digital currencies.

NEW INTERNET SECURITY PRINCIPLES

The World Economic Forum announced new internet security principles, developed by a group of leading ISPs and multilateral organisations, to help protect up to one billion users. Unveiling the new initiative in Davos at its 50th annual meeting, the WEF said BT, Deutsche Telekom, Du Telecom, Europol, Global Cyber Alliance, Internet Society, Korea Telecom, Proximus, Saudi Telcom, Singtel, Telstra and ITU endorse these new principles combating high-volume cyberattacks, protecting up to one billion consumers in 180 countries. While certain cyberattacks focus on specific organisations, the majority target the largest number of internet users possible. Such attacks are often relatively easy for cybercriminals to undertake and can cause serious harm.

What

1. The impact of indiscriminate malicious activity online can be significant and carries an estimated global price tag of \$6 trillion in 2021, the WEF said.
2. The World Economic Forum Centre for Cybersecurity brought together a group of leading internet service providers (ISPs) and multilateral organisations to develop new ways to protect and prevent these attacks from reaching consumers.
3. The new principles ask ISPs to protect consumers by default from widespread cyberattacks and act collectively with peers to identify and respond to known threats.
4. Besides, ISPs need to take action to raise awareness and understanding of threats and support consumers in protecting themselves and their networks.
5. The ISPs will also work more closely with manufacturers and vendors of hardware, software and infrastructure to increase minimum levels of security.
6. Besides, they will take action to shore up the security of routing and signalling to reinforce effective defence against attacks.
7. The WEF said it will now use its Platform for Shaping the Future of Cybersecurity and Digital Trust to drive adoption of the principles and seek to initiate a dialogue between public- and private-sector stakeholders on how governments can incentivise uptake and establish clearer policy frameworks and expectations.
8. By working collaboratively, ISPs will be better placed to protect their customers and defend their own networks than if they work alone.

X-RAY VARIABILITY IN BLACK HOLE SYSTEMS

Scientists in Pune and Kanpur have identified how X-rays emitted by the accretion disk around black holes vary in frequency, a statement issued on 23 January 2020 said. A team of scientists from the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune and the IIT-Kanpur studied X-ray emissions from a black hole binary (a black hole and a star orbiting each other) GRS 1915+105 using the Indian

Space Observatory AstroSat launched by ISRO.

What

1. With this research, we have been able to identify the origin of widely-known X-ray variability in black hole systems as the time taken by pressure waves to travel through the accretion disk.
2. In our future research projects, we will work on the theoretical models which could explain the physical process involved, Divya Rawat, a PhD student at IIT-Kanpur, and part of the investigation team, said. Accretion disk is a disk of slowly spiralling gas formed by matter from a star falling into the black hole.
3. The scientists analysed data from the Large Area X-ray Proportional Counter (LAXPC) and the Soft X-ray Telescope (SXT) instruments, which were both developed in TIFR Mumbai.
4. Using the unique capabilities of these instruments, they were able to estimate simultaneously the frequency of the oscillation, the inner accretion disk radius and the accretion rate, which is the amount of matter going into the black hole per second.
5. The inner regions of the disk produce X-rays, which sometimes vary in time as oscillations, whose frequencies must correspond to a characteristic timescale of the system. Due to proximity of the black hole, these timescales should be modified by **Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity**. These oscillations may be associated with different physical phenomena and the theory predicts how their frequency would change with the inner disk radius.

Flashback

1. **ASTROSAT is India's first dedicated multi wavelength space observatory.** This scientific satellite mission endeavours for a more detailed understanding of our universe.
2. One of the unique features of ASTROSAT mission is that enables the simultaneous multi-wavelength observations of various astronomical objects with a single satellite.
3. ASTROSAT observes universe in the optical, Ultraviolet, low and high energy X-ray regions of the electromagnetic spectrum, whereas most other scientific satellites are capable of observing a narrow range of wavelength band.
4. ASTROSAT with a lift-off mass of about 1513 kg was launched into a 650 km orbit inclined at an angle of 6 deg to the equator by PSLV-C30.
5. The science data gathered by five payloads of ASTROSAT are telemetered to the ground station at MOX. The data is then processed, archived and distributed by Indian Space Science Data Centre (ISSDC) located at Byalalu, near Bangalore.

NASA DECOMMISSIONS SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE

NASA has decommissioned the Spitzer Space Telescope, one of its greatest observatories which has studied the universe by detecting cosmic infrared radiation for more than 16 years, the US space agency said in a statement. Spitzer, which was launched in 2003, studied some of the most distant galaxies ever detected with the light from some of the cosmic bodies travelling for billions of years to reach the telescope.

What

1. Spitzer taught us how important infrared light is to understanding our universe, both in our own cosmic neighbourhood, and as far away as the most distant galaxies.
2. The advances we make across many areas in astrophysics in the future will be because of **Spitzer's extraordinary legacy**.
3. By detecting infrared light, with wavelengths ranging from about 700 nanometres —

too small to see with the naked eye — to about a millimetre, Spitzer could help astronomers unveil the presence of cosmic entities which are too cold to emit much visible light, including planets outside our solar system, and cold matter found in the space between stars.

4. Spitzer, NASA astronomers said, also found a previously undetected ring around Saturn, composed of sparse dust particles that visible-light observatories cannot see.
5. **It's quite amazing when you lay out everything that Spitzer has done in its lifetime**, from detecting asteroids in our solar system no larger than a stretch limousine to learning about some of the most distant galaxies we know of, said Michael Werner, Spitzer's project scientist.
6. **According to NASA, the original mission planners didn't expect Spitzer to operate for 16-plus years.**
7. **It wasn't in the plan to have Spitzer operating so far away from Earth**, so the team has had to adapt year after year to keep the spacecraft operating.
8. During the 2016 NASA Senior Review process, the agency had said, they made a decision to close out the Spitzer mission, which was initially planned for 2018 in anticipation of the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), which will also conduct infrared astronomy.

MISCELLANEOUS

DELHI UNDER NSA

Delhi's Lieutenant Governor has passed an order authorizing the city's police, controlled by the Union home ministry, to place the national capital under the National Security Act (NSA). This law allows the police to detain a person without trial for months should it be satisfied that the individual poses a threat to national security. The city, as per the order, has been put under the NSA for three months starting 19 January.

What

1. In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (3) of section 3, read with clause (c) of Section 2 of the National Security Act, 1980, the Lt Governor pleased to direct that during the period January 19 to April 18, the Delhi Police Commissioner may also exercise the powers of detaining authority under sub-section (2) of the section 3 of the aforesaid Act," the notification stated.
2. In August 2019, the NSA was extended to Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state, giving armed forces in the valley to detain a person on grounds of threat to national security
3. Under the National Security Act, an individual can be detained without a charge for up to 12 months. The individual also need not be informed of the charges for 10 days.
4. The detained individual can appeal before a high court advisory board but was not allowed a lawyer during the trial.
5. Also, the individual can be put under preventive detention for months if authorities are satisfied that he/she is a threat to national security or law and order. The state government concerned needs to be intimated that an individual has been detained under the NSA.
6. The order by the Delhi L-G comes at a time when the capital is seeing protests against the new citizenship law and the National Register of Citizens. A similar order was issued in Andhra Pradesh on 14 January.

History of the law

1. The National Security Act was promulgated on 23 September 1980 by the **Indira Gandhi government and its purpose is** "to provide for preventive detention in

certain cases and for matters connected there with”.

2. It applies to the entirety of India. According to the National Security Act, the grounds for preventive detention of a person include:
 1. Acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.
 2. Regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or with a view to making arrangements for his expulsion from India.
 3. Preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.

'TIME TO CARE' STUDY

India's richest 1 percent hold more than four-times the wealth held by 953 million people who make up for the bottom 70 per cent of the country's population, while the total wealth of all Indian billionaires is more than the full-year budget, a new study said on 20 January 2020. Releasing the study 'Time to Care' ahead of the 50th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), rights group Oxfam also said the world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 per cent of the planet's population.

What

1. The report flagged that global inequality is shockingly entrenched and vast and the number of billionaires has doubled in the last decade, despite their combined wealth having declined in the last year.
2. The gap between rich and poor can't be resolved without deliberate inequality-busting policies, and too few governments are committed to these, said Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar.
3. The issues of income and gender inequality are expected to figure prominently in discussions at the five-day summit of the WEF, starting on 20 January 2020.
4. The WEF's annual Global Risks Report has also warned that the downward pressure on the global economy from macroeconomic fragilities and financial inequality continued to intensify in 2019.
5. Concern about inequality underlies recent social unrest in almost every continent, although it may be sparked by different tipping points such as corruption, constitutional breaches, or the rise in prices for basic goods and services, as per the WEF report.
6. Although global inequality has declined over the past three decades, domestic income inequality has risen in many countries, particularly in advanced economies and reached historic highs in some, the Global Risks Report flagged last week.
7. The Oxfam report further said "sexist" economies are fuelling the inequality crisis by enabling wealthy elite to accumulate vast fortunes at the expense of ordinary people and particularly poor women and girls.
8. Regarding India, Oxfam said the combined total wealth of 63 Indian billionaires is higher than the total Union Budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19 which was at Rs 24,42,200 crore.
9. As per the report, it would take a female domestic worker 22,277 years to earn what a top CEO of a technology company makes in one year.
10. With earnings pegged at Rs 106 per second, a tech CEO would make more in 10 minutes than what a domestic worker would make in one year.
11. As per the global survey, the 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the

women in Africa.

- Besides, women and girls put in 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work each and every day -- a contribution to the global economy of at least USD 10.8 trillion a year, more than three times the size of the global tech industry.

UN'S DECARBONISATION TARGET

At least \$1 trillion of investments in new fuel technology is needed to enable the shipping industry to meet U.N. targets for cuts in carbon emissions by 2050, a study published on 20 January 2020 showed. The global shipping fleet, which accounts for 2.2% of the world's CO₂ emissions, is under pressure to reduce those emissions and other pollution. About 90% of world trade is transported by sea. U.N. shipping agency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), aims to reduce the industry's greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from 2008 levels by 2050, a target that will require the swift development of zero or low emission fuels and new ship designs using cleaner technology.

What

- In the first study into costs, researchers estimated that the cumulative investment needed between 2030 and 2050 would be between \$1 trillion to \$1.4 trillion, or an average of \$50 billion to \$70 billion annually for 20 years.
- If the shipping industry was to fully decarbonise by 2050, this would require further investment of some \$400 billion over 20 years, bringing the total to \$1.4 trillion to \$1.9 trillion.
- Our analysis suggests we will see a disruptive and rapid change to align to a new zero carbon system, with fossil fuel aligned assets becoming obsolete or needing significant modification, said Tristan Smith, reader at University College London's (UCL) Energy Institute, which was involved in the study.
- Apart from more than a decade of tough market conditions, the shipping industry is also contending with the exit of many European banks from providing finance, leaving a capital shortfall of tens of billions of dollars annually.
- Around 87% of investments needed would be in land-based infrastructure and production facilities for low-carbon fuels, the study said.
- This includes investments in the production of low-carbon fuels as well as the land-based storage and bunkering infrastructure needed for their supply.
- The remaining 13% of investments are related to the ships themselves including the machinery and onboard storage required for a ship to run on low-carbon fuel.
- The study was carried out by UMAS which includes UCL and the Energy Transitions Commission, a panel of global experts.
- It was conducted on behalf of the non-profit Getting to Zero Coalition, which includes the Global Maritime Forum and World Economic Forum, which is meeting in Davos this week.

RS PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

A Rajya Sabha panel has made 40 recommendations to prevent sexual abuse of children and contain access to and transmission of child pornography in social media. The recommendations include making monitoring apps mandatory on all devices and amending the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POSCO Act) and the Information Technology Act. The report was presented to Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu by Congress Parliamentarian and ad hoc panel's chief Jairam Ramesh.

What

- The Committee recommends modifying the IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011 to include the ability to trace the originator or sender of the message shared on

end-to-end encryption platforms in cases where CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) that has been shared has come to the attention of law enforcement agencies. It further recommended that ISPs proactively monitor and take down CSAM.

2. The Committee recommended that apps that help in monitoring children's access to pornographic content be made mandatory on all devices sold in India, and such apps or similar solutions be developed and made freely available to Internet Service Providers, companies, schools and parents.
3. It further suggested increasing partnerships with financial services industry like credit card providers to prevent online payments systems from being used for purchasing child pornography.

At the legislative level

1. The committee has suggested broadening the definition of child pornography in the POCSO Act, including a provision on child grooming, or using the Internet to facilitate sexual contact with a child, in the Act.
2. The issue of breaking end-to-end encryption has been under contention since the last year, with the government intensifying its pitch asking companies such as WhatsApp to break end-to-end encryption to trace the origin of messages.
3. Though the issue gained steam in light of rumours spread through WhatsApp, leading to several lynchings in the country, if these recommendations come into effect, it could set a precedent for other similar requests.

The technological suggestions

1. The Ministries of Electronics and IT and Home Affairs signing agreements with industry to develop technological solutions for proactive monitoring of CSAM, partner with blockchain companies to track cryptocurrency transactions used to purchase child pornography online.
2. It also suggests making amendments to the Information Technology Act to include punitive measures for those who provide pornography access to children and also those who access, produce or transmit CSAM.
3. The report further suggests that the IT Act include a clause to give powers to the "Union Government through its designated authority to block and/or prohibit all websites/intermediaries that carry CSAM.
4. The Committee has also recommended that MeitY deploy people in priority countries whose "sole job would be to fast-track requests for take-down of content under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT).
5. **The Committee recommends an executive agreement with the US under the US's Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data (CLOUD) Act, 2008 in order to remove bottlenecks for speedy and effective action.**
6. It also says that an upgraded and technologically empowered National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) be designated as the nodal agency to deal with the issue of child pornography and the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) mandatorily record and report annually cases of child pornography of all kinds.
7. A national tipline number should be created where child sexual abuse as well as distribution of child pornographic material can be reported by concerned citizens.
8. The Committee met social media and technology firms including Facebook (which owns WhatsApp and Instagram), Twitter, ShareChat, Google, TikTok and others to understand the issues related to spread and curbing of child pornography.

INDIA CELEBRATES 71ST REPUBLIC DAY

The nation celebrated the 71st Republic Day on 26 January 2020 with a grand military parade and exhibition of its history, cultural diversity and strategic weaponry at the

Rajpath. Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro was the chief guest for this year's ceremony which started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying tributes to martyrs at the National War Memorial. This was the third time that a Brazilian president was the chief guest at the Republic Day.

What

1. There were several firsts in the celebration this year, including the prime minister paying homage at the National War Memorial, display of Chinook and Apache helicopters in the fly past and showcasing of the A-SAT weapons system.

2. Jammu and Kashmir, which participated in the parade for the first time as a Union territory, had the "Back to Village" programme for displaced Kashmiri Pandits as the theme for its tableau.



3. The band played the national anthem with a 21-gun salute in the background when the tricolour was being unfurled at the Rajpath before the start of the parade.
4. Twenty-two tableaux were on display during the parade, of which 16 were of various states and UTs and six were of ministries, departments and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
5. While Goa's tableau highlighted its biodiversity and 'save the frog', its anti-frog poaching campaign, Indian Air Force's tableau was a scaled down model of Rafale aircraft, Tejas aircraft, Light Combat Helicopters, Akash Missiles System, and Astra Missiles against a sky blue background.
6. The tableau of the Ministry of Jal Shakti showcased government's new initiative "Jal Jeevan Mission" which aims to provide a functional tap connection to every rural household by 2024.
7. The National Disaster Response Force's tableau showcased the cutting-edge technology used by the agency during rescue operations in flood-hit areas and Delhi's Anaj Mandi inferno last year.
8. The 'Dhanush' gun system, commanded by Captain Mrigank Bharadwaj, was part of the celebrations for the first time on 26 January 2020. The gun with a maximum range of 36.5 km has the capability of automatic gun alignment and positioning.
9. Heavylift helicopter Chinook and attack helicopter Apache, both recently inducted in the Indian Air Force, took also part in the flypast for the first time.
10. The Chinooks can airlift diverse loads in remote locations. It is a heavy lift, twin rotor helicopter which has enhanced IAF's lift capability across a range of military and HADR missions.

HWOTY FOR 2019

'Samvidhaan', meaning "a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organisation is acknowledged to be governed" was on 28 January 2020 announced as the Oxford Hindi Word of the Year

(HWOTY) for 2019. The Oxford Hindi Word of the Year is a word or expression that has attracted a great deal of attention and reflects the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the past year. It is also the Hindi translation of the word 'Constitution'.

What

1. This year's Hindi Word of the Year is a fitting choice reflecting the mood of the masses as also the focus of the decision makers.
2. Constitution embodies the spirit of the country and the year 2019 was witness to the spirit of the constitution being embraced across segments of the society.
3. 'Samvidhaan' first received widespread attention last year with the abrogation of two key constitutional provisions -- Articles 370 and Article 35(A) -- on August 5, 2019 which removed the special status granted to Jammu & Kashmir.
4. The revocation of the articles led to nationwide debates and discussions, bringing the word to the forefront of conversations across the country.
5. Some major decisions by the Supreme Court also significantly contributed to Samvidhaan's prominence in 2019: The Sabarimala verdict allowing women to visit the Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala, stating that the discrimination stood as violation of the Constitution's fundamental rights such as the right to equality.
6. Other significant decisions included the floor test in Maharashtra to save constitutional values and to ensure the smooth functioning of democracy, and the apex court upholding the order of the former Speaker of the Karnataka assembly disqualifying 17 MLAs under the anti-defection law (the 10th Schedule of the Constitution).
7. The year 2019 witnessed the values of democracy, secularism, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity being tested on the touchstone of the Constitution or Samvidhaan.
8. The Oxford dictionaries' team invited entries for the Oxford Hindi Word of the Year through its Facebook page and received several hundred diverse and thoughtful entries.

Flashback

1. Established in 1912, Oxford Union Press (OUP) India, a department of the University of Oxford, has grown to be one of the largest publishers in the region, with a strong presence in India and the neighbouring countries, including Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
2. Headquartered in Delhi, it has regional offices in Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai.

SC ALLOWS CENTRE TO BRING AFRICAN CHEETAH

The Supreme Court on 28 January 2020 allowed the Centre to introduce the African cheetah to a suitable habitat in India. Stating that the rare Indian cheetah is almost extinct in the country, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had filed an application seeking permission for the introduction of the African cheetah from Namibia.

What

1. The apex court set up a three-member committee, comprising former director Wildlife of India Ranjit Singh, DG of Wildlife of India Dhananjay Mohan, and DIG, Wildlife, Ministry of Environment and Forests to guide the NTCA in taking a decision on the issue.
2. A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant said the apex court will monitor the project and the committee will submit its report before it every four months.

3. The top court also said the decision for relocation of the African cheetah will be taken after a proper survey and the action of introduction of the animal **will be left to the NTCA's** discretion.
4. It said the NCTA will be guided by the committee of experts who will carry out a survey for the best location.
5. It was submitted before the apex court that the African cheetah will be introduced on an experimental basis in the best suitable habitat to see whether it can adapt to Indian conditions.

Flashback

1. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was established in December 2005 following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force, constituted by the Prime Minister of India for reorganised management of Project Tiger and the many Tiger Reserves in India.
2. A programme for protection called, 'Tiger Protection Program' (popularly known as Project Tiger) was started in 1973, by the Government of India in co-operation with WWF.

FIRST INDIAN IN FOREIGN FOOTBALL CLUB

Indian women's football star Ngangom Bala Devi has become the first Indian woman to earn a professional football contract abroad after signing for Scottish giants Rangers FC. The move, facilitated by Bengaluru FC which entered into two-year collaboration with Rangers last September, was announced at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium on 29 January 2020. The 29-year-old from Manipur has put pen to paper on an 18-month deal after a successful trial last November and will don the prestigious No.10 jersey at the Glasgow-based side.

What

1. **She will become Rangers' first-ever Asian international footballer.**
2. **Bala Devi's** distinguished international career began when she was called up to the senior Indian team aged just 15. She is now the current top-scorer for India, netting 52 times in 58 games, and is also the top international goal scorer in the South Asian region.
3. She **was named the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Women's Player of the Year** twice — in 2015 and 2016 — and has been the top-scorer in the Indian Women's League for the past two seasons.
4. The move, according to Bengaluru FC CEO Mandar Tamhane, could be a game-changer **for Indian women's football ahead of the FIFA U-17 World Cup** which India will host.

UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

The UN has appointed Gita Sabharwal of India as the Resident Coordinator in Thailand. The UN Resident Coordinator is the highest-ranking representatives of the UN development system at the country level. Resident Coordinators lead UN Country **Teams and coordinate the world body's support to countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda**. Resident Coordinators are the designated representatives of the UN Secretary-General. They report to the UN chief.

What

1. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Gita Sabharwal of India as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Thailand, with the host **government's approval, the UN said.**
2. Sabharwal brings 25 years of experience in development, peacebuilding, governance and social policy across five Asian countries, including Maldives.

3. She most recently served the UN in Sri Lanka as the Peacebuilding and Development Adviser for nearly seven years.
4. **Prior to joining the United Nations, Sabharwal was The Asia Foundation's Deputy Country Representative for Maldives and Sri Lanka and has held positions as the Poverty and Policy Adviser for the UK's Department for International Development in India and Vietnam.**
5. **Sabharwal holds a master's degree in development management from UK-based University of Wales and is the author of numerous policy papers on South and South-East Asia.**

PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE OF INDIA

Decorated para-athlete and India's lone woman Paralympic medallist Deepa Malik has been elected as president of the Paralympic Committee of India though the results of the elections are subject to a pending case in the Delhi High Court. The 49-year-old Deepa, who won a silver in shot put F-53 event in the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, was elected unopposed as president in the PCI polls held in Bengaluru on 31 January 2020.

What

1. Gursharan Singh, who was acting as interim president after former chief Rao Inderjit Singh was removed from his post last year, was also elected unopposed as secretary general.
2. Kavender Chaudhury and Shashi Ranjan Prasad Singh were elected as vice president, while M Mahadeva was made treasurer. Nale Nandkishor Baburao and Kantilal Parmar were elected as joint secretaries.
3. Returning Officer R Radha, a retired District and Additional Sessions Judge, while announcing the office bearers said the results will be subject to further orders to be passed in a case pending before the Delhi High Court.
4. Deepa, also a Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna awardee as well as Padma Shri recipient, has also won a silver in the IPC World Championships in 2011 in shot put F 52-53 event, besides bagging a silver each in discus (F 52-53) and javelin throw (F 53-54) events in the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.