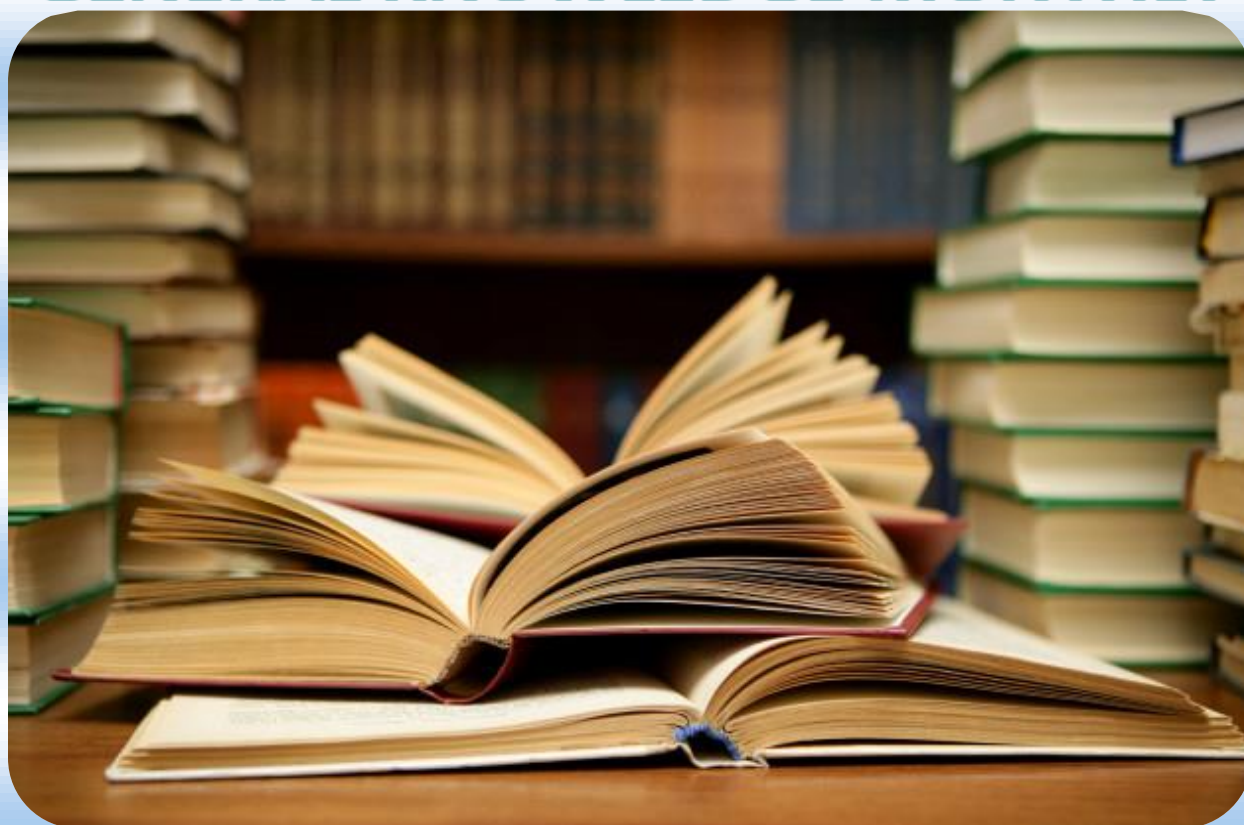


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



MARCH-2022

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

WINGS INDIA 2022

Wings India 2022', Asia's largest event on civil aviation (commercial, general and business) gets under way in Hyderabad from March 24. The fifth edition of the biennial air show, which will take off at Begumpet Airport, comes at a time when the Indian civil aviation market is among the fastest-growing aviation markets globally and contributes \$72 billion to India's GDP.

GI Tag for Narasingapettai Nagaswaram

THANJAVUR: The Narasinghapettai nagaswaram, a classical wind music instrument traditionally made by artisans based at a village near Kumbakonam, has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.



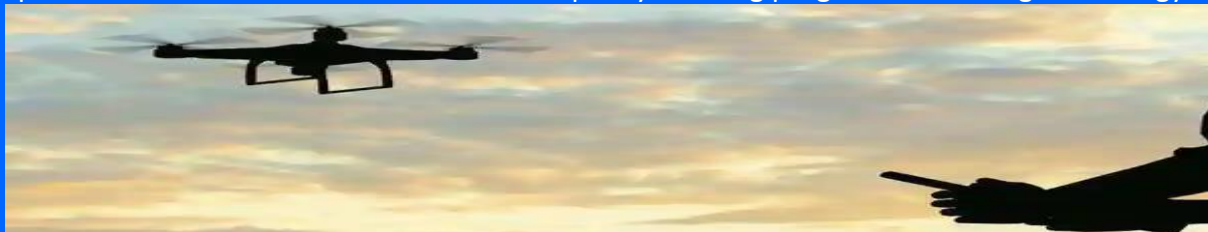
BBNL-BSNL merger

The merger of Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) will be completed this month, the latter's Chairman and Managing Director, P K Purwar, has said. Speaking at an event earlier this month, Purwar said the government had already taken the "policy decision" to merge BBNL and BSNL and that the process was scheduled to be completed before March 31.



Drone-based Mineral Exploration

NMDC Ltd, the country's largest iron ore producer, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with IIT Kharagpur for drone-based mineral exploration. NMDC and IIT Kharagpur would develop spectral products, methods and algorithms for exploration using drone (UAV) for mining. The collaboration would further lead to the development of software spectral tools for mineral excavation and capacity-building programs on mining technology.



Zojila Pass

Due to warmer temperatures and less snowfall, the strategic Zojila Pass that provides vital link between Kashmir Valley and Ladakh on Srinagar-Kargil-Leh Road, which connects Ladakh to the rest of the country via roadlink has been thrown open by the Border Road Organisation (BRO).



National e-Vidhan Application

The north eastern state of Nagaland created history by becoming the first State Assembly in the entire country to implement the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) programme to become completely paperless. In the ongoing Budget session of the state the Nagaland Assembly Secretariat has attached a tablet or e-book on each table in the 60 members' assembly.



World Para Athletics Grand Prix

A 29-member Indian team, led by Paralympian Dharambir, will take part in the 13th Fazza International Championships World Para Athletics Grand Prix beginning here on Monday. Dharambir will compete in men's discus throw and club throw F51 events as the Indian athletes look to make a mark and achieve Minimum Qualification Standard for this July's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, this October.

Gulf Business Summit

Jammu: First time in the history of Jammu Kashmir foreign investors are visiting Kashmir with aim of investments. The government says it is bagging an era of development and employment of UT. A 36-member business delegation from UAE is in Kashmir Valley to explore the business opportunities. 27 thousand crore investments are already cleared the total target of investment is 70 thousand crores says Government.



Retail Inflation in February 2022

India CPI Inflation Rate February 2022: India's retail inflation surged to 6.07 per cent in the month of February, over and above the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) threshold of 6 per cent, data released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) showed Monday. The retail inflation, which is measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), for the month of January was 6.01 per cent. This is the second consecutive time that the CPI data has come over the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) upper margin of 6 per cent.

Green Hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV)

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday launched green hydrogen-based advanced fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV), Toyota Mirai, and said this is the first-of-its-kind project in India that aims to create an ecosystem for such vehicles in the country. Speaking at the event, Gadkari said FCEV, powered by hydrogen, is one of the best zero-emission solutions. It is completely environment-friendly with no tailpipe emissions other than water, the road transport and highways minister said. He added that green hydrogen can be generated from renewable energy and abundantly available biomass.

'Mahatma Gandhi Green Triangle'

As part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to commemorate India's 75th year of independence, a "Green Triangle" named after Mahatma Gandhi was jointly inaugurated in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo. Mayor of Antananarivo Naina Andriantsitohaina and India's Ambassador to Madagascar Abhay Kumar inaugurated the green space on Wednesday at a special ceremony in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo.



Nutraceutical Products in Janaushadhi Kendras

Aimed at providing accessible, standardised and affordable generic medicines, the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) Kendras, which currently offer a product basket of 1,451 drugs and 240 surgical instruments, have added nutraceuticals products, including protein powder and bar, malt-based food supplements and immunity bar for its customers. Currently there are about 8,675 PMBJP Kendras that have been opened in districts across the country with three IT enabled warehouses functional at Gurugram, Chennai and Guwahati and fourth one is ready to start operations at Surat.

EPFO Interest Rate -Update

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation has slashed interest rate on provident fund deposits to 8.1% for 2021-22 from 8.5% credited in 2020-21 and 2019-20. This is the lowest in more than four decades. EPFO had credited 8.0% as interest rate in 1977-78. Since then, it has been either 8.25% or more. The interest rate of 8.1% has been declared based on EPFO's estimated income for the year at Rs 76,768 crore and this will leave the retirement fund body with a surplus of Rs 450 crore.

V-Dem Institute – Democracy Report 2022

New Delhi: India has figured in the top 10 autocratising countries of the world along with El Salvador, Turkey and Hungary, with projections ominously indicating that there will be a further decline in democracy in the country, according to the latest report of the V-Dem Institute on the state of democracy globally. After being classified as 'electoral autocracy' in the last year's report, India continues to hold on to its dubious honour even in this year's report. Consequently, India finds itself in the category of the bottom 40% to 50% of countries.

Impact of War on Semiconductor Supply

Semiconductor chips are ubiquitous and in short supply. Some nations have decided that they are a part of their national security and economic security. The current squeeze in chip supply has led to the proposed Chips for America Act, European Chips Act, China's subsidies for chip manufacture and India's recently announced incentive schemes for semiconductor manufacture. Semiconductor chips are ubiquitous and in short supply. Some nations have decided that they are a part of their national security and economic security.

Gujarat Sports Policy 2022-27

The Gujarat government unveiled Sports Policy 2022-27 that talks about setting up of four new High Performance Centre (HPC) for elite athletes with training facilities of international standards. It also promises to set up a sports goods manufacturing cluster in the state.



RBI Framework for Micro-finance Lenders

Microfinance institutions and an MFI-turned lender hailed the RBI's Regulatory Framework on microfinance loans announced on Monday saying that these guidelines will further deepen the penetration of micro-credit in the country. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allowed microfinance lenders to fix interest rates on loans with a rider that those should not be usurious for the borrowers. A microfinance loan is defined as a collateral-free loan given to a household having an annual income of up to Rs 3 lakh.

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Subordinate Debt (CGSSD)

Credit and Finance for MSMEs: The MSME Ministry Monday announced the extension of the Rs 20,000-crore Credit Guarantee Scheme for Subordinate Debt (CGSSD) by another year. Launched in June 2020, the scheme was initially valid till March 31, 2021, but was later extended till March 31, 2022, in order to "keep the avenues of assistance to stressed MSME units open," the ministry said in a statement. The latest extension was "on the basis of the requests received from the stakeholders of the scheme," the ministry added. The scheme provides credit facility via banks to the promoters of stressed MSMEs.

NASA: Confirmation of 5000 Exoplanets

In a milestone for astronomy – and possibly the search for extraterrestrial life – NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory confirmed there are now 5,000 known planets beyond our solar system. These so-called exoplanets include rocky worlds roughly the size of Earth, gas giants larger than Jupiter and "mini-Neptunes." "It's not just a number," Jessie Christiansen, science lead for the NASA Exoplanet Archive and a research scientist with the NASA Exoplanet Science Institute at Caltech, said in a statement.

Google Air Raid Alerts System

Google is rolling out an Air Raid Alerts system on Android phones in Ukraine, This is to act as a supplement to the country's existing air raid alert systems and will be based on the alerts provided by the government. The company will also be highlighting the Ukrainian Alarm (Повітряна тривога) app to Google Play users. "Tragically, millions of people in Ukraine now rely on air strike alerts to try to get to safety.

Strengthening of Pharmaceutical Industry (SPI) scheme

Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers on Friday released guidelines for 'Strengthening of Pharmaceutical Industry (SPI)' scheme that is seen to address rising demand in terms of support required to existing Pharma clusters and MSMEs across the country to improve their productivity, quality and sustainability. The Centre has assigned an outlay of ₹500 crore for the period from fiscal FY 21-22 to FY 25-26.

Vincov-19 COVID Drug

The first indigenous drug to treat COVID-19 is likely to be made available to the public soon with the completion of clinical trials, which showed "excellent results", informed Tata Institute for Genetics and Society (TIGS) director Rakesh Mishra on Friday. The product 'Vincov-19' is a collaborative effort of CSIR-Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB), University of Hyderabad (UoH) and city-based VINS Bioproducts. In this, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is inactivated and injected into horses.

Debasish Panda- New IRDAI Chief

Debasish Panda on Monday took charge as the chairman of Insurance Regulatory Development of India (Irdai), following his appointment last week. Panda has been appointed as the chairman of Irdai for a period of three years. The position of Irdai chairman was vacant for a period of over nine months, ever since Subhash Chandra Khuntia demitted office in May 2021. Panda is an officer of Indian Administrative Service of 1987 batch of Uttar Pradesh cadre.

India's M-Cap in Top 5

India's equity market has broken into the world's top five club in terms of market capitalisation for the first time. The country's total market cap stands at \$3.21 trillion, which is higher than that of the UK (\$3.19 trillion), Saudi Arabia (\$3.18 trillion), and Canada (\$3.18 trillion). This year, India has climbed two positions, despite a 7.4 per cent drop in its market cap.



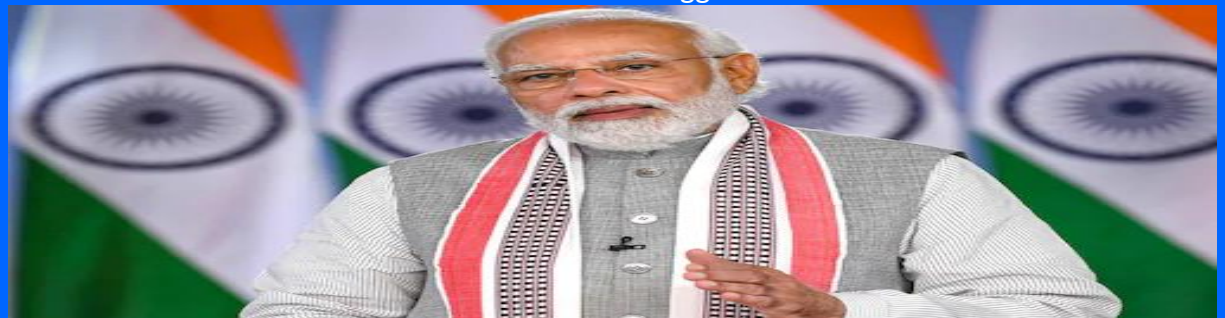
2021 World Air Quality Report

Delhi was found to be the most polluted capital in the world for the fourth consecutive year in 2021 and 35 of the 50 cities with the worst air quality were in India, according to a new report. In 2021, none of the cities in India met the prescribed World Health Organization air quality standards of 5 micrograms per cubic meter, stated the World Air Quality Report 2021.



Kolkata Biplobi Bharat Gallery

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the occasion of Shaheed Diwas on Wednesday, virtually inaugurated the Biplobi Bharat Gallery at Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata. He said that the gallery provides a holistic view of the events that led to Independence, highlighting the contributions of revolutionaries in the freedom struggle.



INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Ashish Jha- US COVID Response Chief

In early 2020, when the U.S. was confronting the first wave of COVID-19, with its health system starting to feel the strain, a Harvard physician had said on a morning news show: “We can either have a national quarantine now, two weeks, get a grip on where things are, and then reassess, or we can not, wait another week, and when things look really terrible, be forced into it.”



NATO 'Cold Response 2022'

What does it take to defend, fight and survive in an Arctic environment? What do you do if you fall through the ice while wearing 20 kilograms of military gear? Cold Response 2022 is a long-planned exercise bringing together thousands of troops from NATO Allies and partners, testing their ability to work together in cold weather conditions across Norway – on land, in the air and at sea.

The Azov Battalion

When Russia annexed Crimea in February 2014, it faced no military resistance. Ukraine did not have an adequate number of combat-ready troops to mount a defence. Subsequently, when Russia-backed separatists took over government buildings in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region as a prelude to full-fledged insurgency.



Russia claims first use of hypersonic Kinzhal missile in Ukraine

President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly highlighted Russia's investment in hypersonic missiles, which can travel at more than five times the speed of sound, or Mach 5. The statistics are impressive: according to Russian officials the Kinzhal can hit a target up to 2,000km (1,240 miles) away and can fly faster than 6,000 km/h. But does that make them any more dangerous than other missiles or even artillery which can cause just as much death and destruction?



US Fed Rate Hike – Impact on India

The US Federal Reserve's decision to raise the interest rate for the first time in over three years will have only a limited spillover effect on India, as the markets have mostly priced in the impact, economists told FE. Monetary policy will continue to be anchored by domestic macro-economic conditions rather than global factors. However, the liquidity tightening measures by the Fed and some other key central banks may force the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to adopt a less dovish tone in its next policy meeting in April, while continuing with its accommodative stance to support growth, they said.

Red-orange Sahara Dust Storm

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Hot air from the Sahara Desert has swirled over the Mediterranean Sea and coated Spain with red-orange dust, prompting authorities to issue extremely bad air quality warnings Tuesday for Madrid and a large swath of the country. The national air quality index listed the capital and large parts of the southeast coast as “extremely unfavorable” — its worst rating.



Russia's Export Bans

Russia has hit back at western sanctions for invading Ukraine by imposing export bans on a string of products until the end of 2022. The ban covers exports of telecoms, medical, vehicle, agricultural, and electrical equipment, as well as some forestry products such as timber.



Kyiv-Moscow dialogue on Nuclear Safety

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has succeeded in establishing a direct dialogue on nuclear security between Russia and Ukraine at a high level, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said on Thursday.



Russian Debt Default

International investors are bracing themselves for a wave of defaults on Russian debt repayments, as the Kremlin tightens its grip over the country's financial system following its invasion of Ukraine.



Benin Bronze Collection

Months after launching an institution-wide review of its practices and ethical code, the prestigious Smithsonian museum has announced it will return most of its collection of Benin Bronzes to their homeland Nigeria. The organisation's decision comes amid renewed calls worldwide for western museums to return plundered artefacts to their countries of origin. Around five months ago, the Smithsonian had first removed its entire collection of Benin Bronzes — formally known as the 'Benin Kingdom Court Style artworks' — from display at its National Museum of African Art in Washington DC.

Katalin Novák – Hungary's First Female President

Hungary's parliament has elected the ruling Fidesz party lawmaker Katalin Novák as the country's first female president, buttressing the nationalist agenda of the prime minister, Viktor Orbán, which has triggered acrimony with the EU.



Autism Early Screening Tool

In a five-year study of more than 13,500 children, researchers at Australia's La Trobe University in Melbourne tested an early screening tool they had developed for autism. They found that 83% of children aged between 12 and 24 months, who were "flagged by the tool," were later diagnosed with autism. That is about four years earlier than current standard tests, the researchers said. And the earlier the diagnosis, they said, the better the life outcomes can be for people with autism.



Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) Status

The United States President, Joe Biden has stated that the US will move to withdraw Russia's "most favoured nation" (MFN) status. If Congress approves the bill, it will essentially suspend normal trade relations between the two nations and allow the administration to implement fresh taxes and sanctions in retaliation to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Biden's decision is coordinated with the Group of Seven (G-7) and the European Union, and it marks a new level of economic pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

