

Abhyaas Newsboard...

For the quintessential test prep student

1. Mongolian Kanjur Manuscripts



The Ministry of Culture had taken up the project of reprinting of 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur under the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM). Now, the first set of five volumes of Mongolian Kanjur have been released.

More On This:

In the Mongolian language 'Kanjur' means 'Concise Orders'- the words of Lord Buddha in particular.

- It is held in high esteem by Mongolian Buddhists and they worship the Kanjur at temples and recite the lines of Kanjur in daily life as a sacred ritual.
- The Mongolian Kanjur has been translated from Tibetan. The language of the Kanjur is Classical Mongolian.
- Buddhism was carried to Mongolia by Indian cultural and religious ambassadors during the early Christian era.
- As a result, today, Buddhists form the single largest religious denomination in Mongolia.

2. PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2020



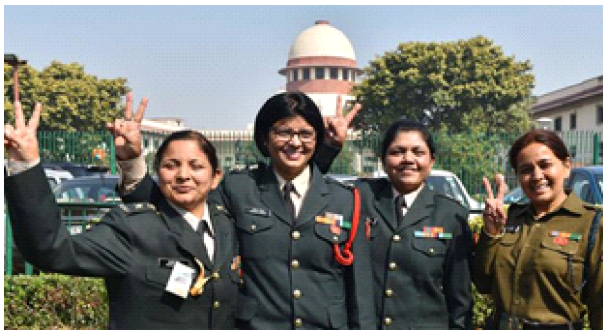
Revamped PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration has been launched.

More On This:

The Scheme has been revamped to recognize the performance of the District Collectors towards outcome indicators, economic development, peoples' participation and redressal of public grievances.

- Nominations have been called in four major categories – District Performance Indicators Programme, Innovation General Category, Aspirational Districts Program and Namami Gange Program.
- The scheme for the very first time seeks to recognize the efforts of District level officials in the Namami Gange Programme. Under this award category, one award shall be given to a district out of the 57 notified District Ganga Committees under the Namami Gange Programme.

3. Permanent commission to all women officers in Army



The Supreme Court has allowed a one-month extension to the government to implement its February 17 judgment to grant permanent commission/command posts to eligible women officers in the armed forces.

More On This:

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court which said the government was creating hurdles in the implementation of the judgment.

However, the government has clarified that it is in the process of implementation of the judgment was at an "advanced state" and a circular would be issued soon.

It rejected arguments against greater role for women officers, saying these violated equality under law (Article 14).

4. Judicial review can't be available prior to Speaker's decision



Rajasthan Speaker CP Joshi has served notices to 19 Congress MLAs including Sachin Pilot asking them why they cannot be disqualified. The MLAs have time until July 17 to reply.

More On This:

The Congress in its complaint to the Speaker has accused the rebel MLAs of attempting to jump parties.

- The notice has been served under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, popularly known as the anti-defection law.
- Courts have been extremely reluctant to interfere with the powers of the Speaker under the Tenth Schedule. While deciding on the disqualification, the Speaker exercises powers that have been conferred to him under the Constitution.
- Even when challenged, as it was in the case of Karnataka in 2019, the court gave time to the Speaker to decide on the pleas.

Hence, judicial review cannot be available at a stage prior to the making of a decision by the Speaker/Chairman and a quia timet action would not be permissible. Nor would interference be permissible at an interlocutory stage of the proceedings.

5. Merger of political parties under 10th schedule

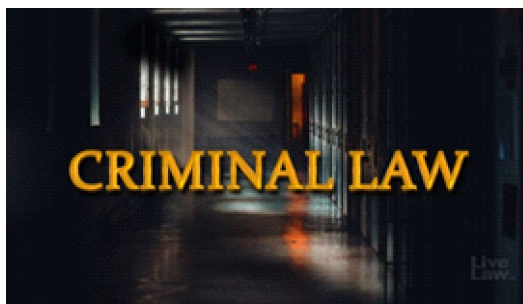


The Rajasthan High Court has issued notices to the speaker and secretary of the state legislative assembly and six MLAs, who contested elections on BSP tickets and then defected to the Congress.

More On This:

- The BSP won six seats in Rajasthan but all its MLAs joined the Congress in September last year.
- But, now at the national level, BSP is arguing that a state unit of a national party cannot be merged without the party being merged at the national level.
- Besides, BSP national secretary has also issued a whip to 6 MLAs telling them to vote against the Congress in case there is a floor test.

6. Criminal law reforms



A group of retired judges, former bureaucrats and others have written to the newly constituted Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws, questioning the lack of diversity in the committee and asking for more transparency in its functioning.

More On This:

This committee was first announced by home minister Amit Shah in parliament in December 2019.

- The panel would look into required amendments to the Indian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure to deal with the issue of mob lynching.
- The Committee was constituted through a Ministry of Home Affairs notification on May 4, 2020. The chairperson is Ranbir Singh (vice-chancellor, National Law University Delhi).
- The line-up of Committee's members "lacks diversity, both in terms of the social identity of the members, as well as their professional background and experience." Unlike previous committees that had been assigned reforms of such magnitude, this one did not even have full-time members.

7. Disabled are entitled to same benefits of SC/ST quota: SC



The Supreme Court, in a significant decision, has confirmed that persons suffering from disabilities are also socially backward and entitled to the same benefits of relaxation as Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates in public employment and education.

More On This:

The Court has upheld a 2012 judgment of the Delhi High Court in *Anamol Bhandari (minor) through his father/Natural Guardian v. Delhi Technological University* in a significant decision.

- A petition was filed by Aryan Raj, a special needs person, against the Government College of Arts, Chandigarh.
- The college denied Mr. Raj relaxation in minimum qualifying marks in the Painting and Applied Art course.
- The college insisted that disabled persons too need to meet the general qualifying standard of 40% in the aptitude test, whereas SC/ST candidates were given a relaxation to 35%.
- Need for reservations: Intellectually/mentally challenged persons have certain limitations, which are not there in physically challenged persons.

8. What is plea bargaining and how does it work?



Many members of the Tablighi Jamaat belonging to different countries have obtained release from court cases in recent days by means of plea bargaining.

More On This:

- It refers to a person charged with a criminal offence negotiating with the prosecution for a lesser punishment than what is provided in law by pleading guilty to a less serious offence.
- It primarily involves pre-trial negotiations between the accused and the prosecutor. It may involve bargaining on the charge or in the quantum of sentence.
- When was it introduced in India?
- Plea bargaining was introduced in 2006 as part of a set of amendments to the CrPC as Chapter XXI-A, containing Sections 265A to 265L.
- In India, a plea bargaining process can be initiated only by the accused. The accused will have to apply to the court for invoking the benefit of bargaining.

9. Contempt of Court



The Supreme Court of India suo motu registered a case of contempt against lawyer Prashant Bhushan. He stands accused of the Criminal contempt.

More On This:

The court registered the proceedings after a petition was moved citing two tweets Bhushan had published over the last two months.

- In the tweets, the lawyer had commented on Chief Justice of India SA Bobde and about the general functioning of the court under the last four chief justices. The court said it found the tweets prima facie contempt.
- The contempt of court law is one of the most controversial elements in the Indian legal context.
- While the basic idea of a contempt law is to punish those who do not respect the orders of the courts, in the Indian context, contempt is also used to punish speech that lowers the dignity of the court and interferes with the administration of justice.

10. Police reform and the crucial judicial actor

POLICE REFORM AND CRUCIAL JUDICIAL ACTOR

The death of a father and son due to alleged custodial torture in Sathankulam town near Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu has brought into focus the topic "Police reforms and the role of Judiciary".

More On This:

Such recurring incidents also raise one significant question:

How many more times must powerless citizens suffer the blows of a lathi or a baton, the kicks of patent leather boots, be violated by the "wooden rollers" around their private areas, not to mention spending hours inside a police lockup, all as a part of an "investigation" by police searching for "truth"?

- Role of judiciary: As always, when the conversation veers in this direction it becomes natural to look towards the judiciary as the source of hope and action.
- In this case, the Madurai High Court has taken notice on its own and is "closely" monitoring the situation.

11. One Nation One Voter ID



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has made it possible for senior citizens above the age of 65 to vote by postal ballot, given that they are at greater risk from exposure to the novel coronavirus.

More On This:

Hitherto, this option was available only to disabled citizens and those above 80 years.

Now, there is an opinion that the same empowering approach be extended to another group which faces enormous difficulties in exercising its franchise: migrant workers.

- Internal migrant workers constitute about 13.9 crore as in the Economic Survey of 2017, that is nearly a third of India's labour force.
- They are often unable to exercise their voting rights. Therefore, Migrant workers become quasi-disenfranchised, forgotten voters because they cannot afford to return home on election day to choose their representatives.

12. New Education Policy 2020



First new education policy in 34 years has been brought out. The union Cabinet gave its nod to the new policy recently.

More On This:

The aim of the National Education Policy 2020 is to create an education system which is deeply rooted in Indian ethos and can rebuild India as a global knowledge superpower, by providing high-quality education to all.

- A panel headed by former ISRO chief K. Kasturirangan submitted a draft in December 2018, which was made public and opened for feedback after the Lok Sabha election in May 2019.
- By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a four year integrated B.Ed. degree.
- Teachers will also be given training in online educational methods relevant to the Indian situation in order to help bridge the digital divide.

13. 4th Edition of Khelo India Youth Games to be hosted by Haryana



On July 25, 2020, the Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Kiren Rijiju announced that Haryana is to host the fourth edition of Khelo India Youth Games. The Games has been scheduled to be conducted after Tokyo Olympics.

More On This:

Star Sports has been signed in as the official broadcast of Khelo India Youth Games. The GoI has been taking immense measures to keep the sports activities alive even during COVID-19 times.

- The Sports Authority of India transferred Rs 30,000 to the accounts of Khelo India athletes to help them during COVID-19 crisis. To achieve this, a fund of Rs 8.25 crores was allocated.
- The Khelo India scheme was launched to improve sports culture in India. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- The scheme aims to make India a good sporting nation. The GoI allocates Rs 5 lakh per annum every year over the period of 8 years.

14. 2022 FIFA World Cup to be held in Qatar



On July 15, 2020, the Federation Internationale de Football Association announced that the 2022 World Cup is to be held in Qatar. The governing body also released schedule of matches.

More On This:

The 2022 FIFA World Cup will be the first world cup to be held in Arab World and also the first in a muslim-majority country.

- The World Cup would be the last to involve 32 teams as the teams are to be increased to 48 in 2026 tournament.
- The tournament is to be held in November-December. The final match of the tournament has been scheduled on December 18, 2020, which is also Qatar National Day.
- India has never participated at the FIFA World Cup. Indian National Team ranks 108 in the latest FIFA rankings that was released in 2019. The Indian Football team has participated in AFC Asian Cup and Olympics.

15. Centre comes up with the sport committee for National Sports Awards 2020



The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports came up with a selection committee for selecting awardees for various sports awards for the year 2020.

More On This:

Following the trend this year also single selection committee for all the sports awards is being made. Retired Justice of Supreme Court Justice Mukundakam Sharma is made the Chairperson of the Committee.

- The committee includes various others eminent personality from sports including Virendra Sehwag (Cricket), Sardar Singh (Hockey), Monalisa Baruah Mehta (Table Tennis), Deepa Malik (Para-athletics), Venkatesan Devarajan (Boxing) as well as well-known media persons including Sports Commentator Manish Batavia and Sports Journalists Alok Sinha and Neeru Bhatia.
- The selection committee will also have representation from the Sports Ministry, including Sports Authority of India Director General Sandip Pradhan, Joint Secretary (Sports Development) L S Singh and Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) CEO Rajesh Rajagopalan.

Awards Included:

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Dronacharya Awards, Arjuna Awards, Dhyan Chand Awards, Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar Award Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA)

16. 6th BRICS Environment meeting held in Russia



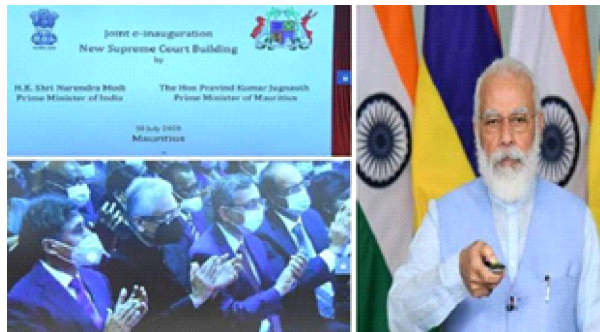
On 30th July 2020, the Environment Ministers of 6th BRICS countries took part in the 6th BRICS Environment meeting.

More On This:

It was held online via video conferencing under the presidency of Russia. The meeting was preceded by the BRICS Working Group meeting.

- Representing India at the meeting Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar emphasized India's concern towards attaining SDG (Sustainable Development Goal).
- He also showcased India's great initiative towards tackling air pollution, marine litter and river cleanliness.
- Air Quality Index Monitoring System launched in 2015 in 10 cities initially has been extended to 122 cities today.
- The Union Minister also discussed India's last year launch of the National Clean Air Programme, the goal of which is to reduce particulate pollution by 20-30 per cent relative to 2017 levels by 2024.

17. PM Modi inaugurates Supreme Court building of Mauritius



Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Mauritian Prime Minister Pravin Kumar Jugnauth on Thursday virtually inaugurated the new Supreme Court building at Port Louis.

More On This:

The building has been constructed with Indian assistance as India's sign of cooperation with countries in the Indian Ocean Region.

- The inauguration process was done online via video conferencing in the presence of senior members of the judiciary from Mauritius and other esteemed delegates from both the country as well.
- The newly inaugurated building is one of its kind first Indian assisted project within the capital city of Port Louis.

18. Induction of first set of five Rafale fighter Jets



The first set of five Rafale aircrafts landed in Ambala air base on July 29 to join IAF's team.

More On This:

- Section 144 CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code) imposed in 4 adjacent villages of Ambala air base. Public gathering on roofs and capturing any kind of photography of landing approaches was strictly prohibited. Jodhpur air base was taken as an alternate option in case of any kind of emergency.
- On 27th July, five Rafale jets took off from Merignac airbase in Bordeaux, France to join the IAF. The Indian Ambassador to France Mr. Jawed Ashraf had a discussion with the pilots of the fighter jets.

19. India-Indonesia Defence Ministers Dialogue



On July 27, 2020, Defence Ministers Dialogue was held in New Delhi between India and Indonesia. India and Indonesia were represented by their respective Defence Ministers Shri Rajnath Singh and Prabbowo Subianto.

More On This:

- The leaders held discussions on strengthening the ties between the two maritime neighbours. The countries will inject a new momentum to their strategic partnership. The talks included export of BrahMos missile to Indonesia by India.
- With the India-China stand off at Line of Actual Control, there are possibilities for similar encounters in the maritime. Predicting this, India has been working hard to strengthen its maritime cooperation.

20. United Nations General Assembly to go virtual for the first time



The 75th United Nations General Assembly is to be conducted virtually in 2020 for the first time in its history. The 2020 session is to begin on September 15.

More On This:

This year, pre recorded statements of world leaders are to be aired. With the meet being arranged virtually, the world is expecting leaders such as Kim Jong Un of North Korea to participate in the meet. Kim has been avoiding the meet traditionally to avoid travelling to the US.

The main highlights of the 2020 UNGA are as follows:

- Biodiversity Summit
- A high-level meeting to celebrate 25th anniversary of fourth world conference on women
- Climate Week

21. India to attend G20 Digital Ministers Meet



The Union Minister of Information Technology Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad is to attend G20 Digital Ministers' Meet on July 22

More On This:

The Digital Economy Ministers Meet is hosted by Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabia Presidency has chosen the theme as Realizing Opportunities of the 21st century for all.

- Under the theme, the ministers representing the G20 member countries will discuss the following
- Empowering people by creating conditions where all people especially the youth and women can live, work and thrive
- Safeguard the planet by fostering collective efforts to protect our global commons
- To shape new frontiers by adopting long term strategies and share innovation and technological advancements.

22. India-US conduct PASSEX Exercise



On July 20, 2020, the US Navy carrier USS Nimitz conducted maritime drills with Indian warships in the Middle East. The PASSEX exercise comes during a period when India and China are locked in tensed border.

More On This:

The USS Nimitz (world's largest aircraft carrier) was on its way from South China Sea. The naval carrier recently participated in the military exercise conducted in the South China sea along with USS Ronald Reagan.

- The Indian Navy has conducted similar PASSEX with Japan Maritime Self Defence Force and French Navy. PASSEX is a passage exercise. A passage exercise is normally conducted when there is an opportunity in contrast to pre-planned maritime drills.
- The PASSEX was conducted even while Malabar exercise is fast approaching.
- It is good to conduct frequent exercises with like-minded navies. This will help exchange opportunities. Malabar Exercise is usually held between India, Japan and the US. This year Australia is likely to join the trio. Generally, PASSEX is referred to practice cooperation

23. India-Bhutan open new trade route



On July 16, 2020, India and Bhutan opened a new trade route between Jaigon in West Bengal and Pasakha in Bhutan.

More On This:

The land route will help to move industrial raw materials and goods destined for Pasakha Industrial Estate. The route will help boost trade and commerce and will lead to decongestion of vehicular traffic. Bhutan is India's closest partner.

- India had recently proposed to build road in Yeti territory of Bhutan which China claimed recently.
- The road will also help India access Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh quickly. The road will reduce distance between Guwahati and Tawang by 150 kilometres China claims Tawang to gain absolute control over Tibet.

24. India-European Union Summit held via video conferencing



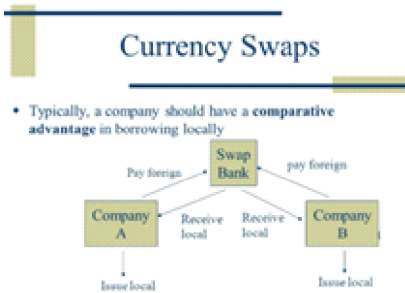
On July 15, 2020, the 15th India-European Union Summit was held through video conferencing. The summit aims to strengthen ties between India and European Union. PM Modi addressed the summit.

More On This:

Under the Summit, India and European Union agreed to boost their ties in the areas of defence, trade and investment. They agreed to launch a dialogue on maritime security.

- The fourteenth India-European Union Summit was held in New Delhi in 2017.
- The Roadmap to 2025 was created during the 15th India-EU Summit. The roadmap does not give rise to any financial commitments and does not create any legally binding rights or obligations.

25. Currency Swap Arrangement (CSA)



The Reserve Bank of India has agreed to a \$400 million currency swap facility for Sri Lanka till November 2022.

More On This:

An arrangement between two friendly countries to involve in trading in their own local currencies.

- As per the arrangements, both countries pay for import and export trade at the pre-determined rates of exchange, without bringing in third country currency like the US Dollar.
- In such arrangements no third country currency is involved, thereby eliminating the need to worry about exchange variations.

26. India's first in-orbit space debris monitoring and tracking system



A Space start up called the Digantara has developed India's first in-orbit space debris monitoring and tracking system. The system works on LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology.

More On This:

The system developed by the start up will provide global real-time earth surveillance. This is to be achieved by deploying a constellation of cost-efficient nano satellites in the Low Earth Orbit. A Low Earth Orbit lies at an altitude of less than 1000 km.

- The system will help international space agencies to track and map space debris. This will aid to minimize the major threats of future space exploration.
- Digantara is India's first air and space surveillance company. The company received a grant of Rs 25 lakhs.

27. India's first plasma bank



Established at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS), Delhi.

More On This:

Aim: To ease access to plasma that is being used as a trial to treat Covid-19 patients.

The plasma bank functions like a blood bank, and has been created specifically for those who are suffering from Covid-19, and have been advised the therapy by doctors.

- The bank will coordinate with patients who have recovered from Covid-19, and are eligible to donate plasma.
- Those who had the disease, but have recovered at least 14 days before the donation can be considered.

28. Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover



The third and final mission to the red planet of the month lifted off on Thursday 30th July at 17:20 IST from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida.

More On This:

- After covering a huge distance of 300 million miles the Mars Perseverance Rover is expected to land on 18th February 2021. The main objective of the Mars Perseverance Rover is to search for signs of ancient life and collect rock and soil samples for a possible return to Earth.
- This launch is followed by the July's earlier launches by the UAE and China on 20th and 23rd July respectively. Though the Rover Perseverance is last to arrive, all three of them is expected to arrive at Mars about the same time in February.

29. Hope: UAE launched first Mars Mission



On July 19, 2020, the United Arab Emirates launched the first ever mission to the red planet, Mars. The spacecraft is to arrive Mars in February 2021.

More On This:

The satellite "Hope" is to be placed in orbit between 20,000 and 43,000 kilometres above the surface of Mars. The satellite will complete its orbit once in 55 hours inclined at an angle of 25 degrees.

- The Hope Satellite has three instruments on board to carry out scientific goals. The satellite will study oxygen and hydrogen levels in the Martian atmosphere. It will make explorations and studies in the last few billion years.
- The mission is to last for two Martian years. One Martian year is equal to two Earth years. Therefore, the mission is to last for 4 Earth years. This is the first UAE mission to Mars. In 2022, UAE is to launch its first mission to Moon.

30. India launches World's Most Affordable COVID-19 kit "COROSURE"

On July 15, 2020, the Union Minister of Human Resource and Development Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank launched world's most affordable COVID-19 kit. The kit was developed by IIT Delhi.

More On This:

The test called "COROSURE" has been billed as the world's most affordable RT-PCR based COVID-19 diagnostic kit. The base price of the kit is Rs 399.

- Around 10 companies have been given licenses to manufacture the kit. The technology of preparing the kit is to be transferred to the companies by IIT Delhi.
- According to Indian Council of Medical Research, with the kit in place the testing capacity of India is to go up to 20 lakhs per day. Currently India is performing 3 lakh testing per day.
- The testing cost of the method is greatly reduced as the kit uses a probe-free method to conduct the test. While the current methods used in India use probes. The kit will also help India achieve its Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan as the kit is to be developed indigenously.

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