

Week 2 Current Affairs Update

8th - 14th April 2020

EVENTS

NATIONAL

POLITY

30% SALARY CUT OF PM, MINISTERS, MPS FOR FY 20-21



DATE: 8th April

Union Cabinet has approved an ordinance of 30% cut in the salaries of all Members of Parliament (MPs) for FY 20-21 and a two-year suspension (2020-21 and 2021-22) of the MP Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme so that the amount saved can go to the Consolidated Fund of India to fight COVID-19.

Key highlights:

- In regard to the 30% salary cut, the passed ordinance has amended the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954.
- The remuneration cut is effective from April 1, 2020 for a period of one year. The salary cut is applicable to all MPs, including the Prime Minister and his Council of Ministers and President, vice-president, and the governors have also voluntarily decided to forgo 30% of their salary for a year.
- As per the approval only the salaries would be cut not the pension and allowances of MPs. According to the Act, as amended in April 2018, MPs are entitled to a monthly salary of Rs.1 lakh, apart from various allowances.

IT

DIGILOCKER AS NATIONAL ACADEMIC DEPOSITORY (NAD)



DATE: 8th April

To enable educational institutions to store digital copies of academic awards, mark sheets and certificates, the ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) has designated DigiLocker as the sole National Academic Depository (NAD).

Key highlights:

- DigiLocker is an Aadhaar-based cloud-based locker in which users can store any electronic versions of important documents such as birth certificates, voters ID cards, University documents and PAN cards.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) will implement NAD as a permanent scheme within Digilocker.
- UGC will have to ensure that reports on various parameters such as registrations, academic award uploads, and verification completed are provided to MHRD.

ECONOMY

SIDBI OFFERS EMERGENCY WORKING CAPITAL TO SMES



DATE: 9th April

The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) will provide emergency working capital of up to Rs 1 crore to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Key highlights:

- The SIDBI Assistance to Facilitate Emergency response against coronavirus (SAFE) loan limit has been increased to 2 crores from Rs 50 lakhs.

- SAFE will enable MSMEs to acquire equipment, plant and machinery, other assets including raw materials required for production or delivery of services & also to meet additional emergencies to ramp-up supplies of these essential products.
- The loans have a fixed rate of interest of 5 % with a repayment tenure of 5 years.

SOCIAL

DIGITAL CAMPAIGN TO ENSURE WORK SAFETY OF TRIBAL GATHERERS



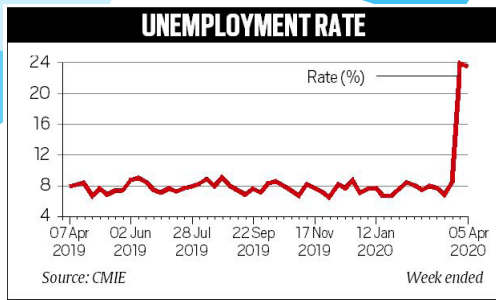
DATE: 11th April

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) has collaborated with UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and WHO (World Health Organisation) for basic orientation on Covid-19 response in order to ensure tribal gatherers carry on their work safely during the collection and harvest of Minor Forest Produce (MFP)/Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP).

Key highlights:

- This collaboration will promote a digital campaign for Self Help Groups (SHGs) highlighting the importance of Social Distancing which will further create awareness among the tribal community and also provide Do's and Don'ts Advisories relating to NTFP during Covid-19.
- Stand With Tribal Families, the component of The Art of Living Foundation's #iStandWithHumanity Initiative is also providing much needed food and ration for the survival of the tribal community.
- The support to SHG Centers for campaigning will be provided by UNICEF in the form of Digital Multimedia content, Webinars for Virtual training, Social Media campaigns and Vanya Radio.
- A total of 1205 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) have been sanctioned in 27 States and 1 Union territory involving around 18,075 Van Dhan Self Help Groups.
- This involves over 3.6 Lakhs tribal gatherers in the Scheme.

INDIA JOBLESS RATE HITS 23.4% AMID COVID-19 LOCKDOWN: CMIE



DATE: 13th April

The Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) has released a data which showed that unemployment rate during March 30 – April 5, 2020 rise to 23.4% from 8.7% for the whole of March 2020 which reflects the impact of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic breakdown.

Key highlights:

- The unemployment rate could increase to over 23% once the lockdown is lifted.
- The Labour Participation Rate (LPR) fell to 36%, an all-time low from 41.9% in March 2020. LPR in March is the result of a sharp 9 million fall in the labour force, from 443 million in January to 434 million in March 2020.
- LPR was 42.6% in February 2019 and 42.7% in March 2019. The unemployment rate was 7.7% in February 2019 and 7.1% in January 2019, this rate is rising since its low point of 3.4% in July 2017.
- The labour force consists of all employed persons & unemployed who are actively looking for jobs.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

OPEC AND RUSSIA AGREED TO CUT CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION



DATE: 14th April

In view of the fall in crude prices due to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), an intergovernmental organization of 13 nations, and allies including Russia — a group known as OPEC+,

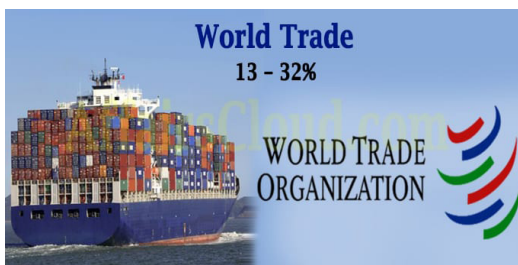
have agreed to cut crude production by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) from May 1, 2020 and will extend through the end of June 2020.

Key highlights:

- Global oil prices have come down below \$ 30 a barrel due to falling disputes in Russia and Saudi Arabia during the Coronavirus epidemic.
- Due to the measures being taken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the demand for fuel has come down drastically, which has led to a significant reduction in oil prices.

ECONOMY

GLOBAL TRADE TO FALL BY 13%-32% IN 2020 DUE TO COVID-19: WTO



DATE: 14th April

World Trade Organisation (WTO) has released Annual Trade Statistics and Outlook Report recently.

Key highlights:

- The report has projected that the global trade is to fall by 13%-32% due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as it disrupts the normal economic activity and life around the world.
- A 2021 recovery is expected but it depends on the duration of the outbreak and the effectiveness of the policy responses.
- Nearly all regions will suffer double-digit declines in trade volumes in 2020, with exports from North America and Asia hit hardest.
- The developing economies will need assistance as the crisis has hit almost all sectors. Before the crisis, global trade was in a difficult position due to the slow economic growth & the rising trading tension between United States (US) & China, which was expected to continue for a large part of 2020.

SOCIAL

COVID-19 RISKED 400 MN INDIAN WORKERS TO FACE POVERTY: ILO REPORT



DATE: 10th April

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has released a report titled 'ILO Monitor 2nd edition: COVID-19 and the world of work- Updated estimates and analysis'.

Key highlights:

- The report has stated that about 400 million people working in the informal economy in India are at risk of falling deeper into poverty due to the coronavirus crisis.
- As of April 1, 2020, ILO's new global estimates that there are chances of expulsion of 195 million full-time jobs or 6.7% of working hours globally in the second quarter of 2020.
- The report further stated that; the coronavirus pandemic is the worst global crisis since World War II.
- Four out of five people (81%) in the global workforce of 3.3 billion are currently affected by full or partial workplace closures.
- Along with India, the number of workers in the informal economy of Nigeria and Brazil are also facing the same crisis due to lockdown.

SPORTS

FIFA'S RANKING 2020: INDIAN FOOTBALL TEAM RETAINS ITS 108TH POSITION; BELGIUM ON TOP



India retains 108th slot at FIFA's latest ranking

DATE: 11th April

FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association)/Coca-Cola World have recently released the Ranking 2020 list.

Key highlights:

- As per its ranking, Indian football team retained its 108th position with 1187 points while Belgium ranked first and world champion France is in

2nd place and Brazil is at 3rd spot.

- In the wake of the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic, qualifier tournaments have been postponed for the FIFA World Cup and other major games at the international level.
- Not only this, due to Corona, the Olympic football tournament, CONMEBOL (South American Football Confederation) Copa America and UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) EURO also had to cancel famous events.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

G20 EXTRAORDINARY ENERGY MINISTERS VIRTUAL MEETING 2020



DATE: 12th April

The Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan has attended the G20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' virtual meeting 2020 on behalf of India through video conferencing.

Key highlights:

- The meeting was presided over by Saudi Arabia, Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz.
- This meeting was focused on the ways and means to ensure stable energy markets, which have been affected due to decrease in demand as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- This meeting was participated by energy Ministers of all G20 countries along with Saudi Arabia Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz.
- International organizations associated with oil and gas sector with energy, OPEC, IEA (International Energy Agency) and IEF (International Energy Forum) were also invited.
- Members of G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom (UK), United States (US), and European Union (EU).
- Spain is a permanent guest invitee to the G20 meetings.

PEOPLE

NATIONAL

TRADE & COMMERCE

UB PRAVIN RAO



DATE: 8th April

WHY IN NEWS: He has been appointed as the chairman of NASSCOM

Key Highlights:

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) has appointed Infosys Chief Operating Officer (COO) UB Pravin Rao as its chairman.
- UB Pravin Rao succeeds Keshav Muruges, Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of World Network Services (WNS) Global Services, who served as chairman of NASSCOM for the year 2019-20.
- Previously Rao was the vice chairman of NASSCOM.

INTERNATIONAL

TRADE & COMMERCE

SHAFALI VERMA



DATE: 8th April

WHY IN NEWS: She has been named as one of the brand ambassadors by PepsiCo.

Key Highlights:

- Beverage Major PepsiCo has named Shafali Verma, 16 years old, Indian Women Cricketer, as one of its brand ambassadors for one year.
- Pepsi will be Shafali's first contract with a major brand.
- Shafali Verma hails from Haryana is the explosive top- order Indian bats-woman, who played the ICC (International Cricket Council) Women's T20I (Twenty20 International) World Cup against Australia in Melbourne.

JEFF BEZOS



DATE: 10th April

WHY IN NEWS: He has been selected at the top position in the Forbes list of 2020.

Key Highlights:

- Forbes has published its 34th annual list of Global Billionaires 2020 which topped Amazon Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jeff Bezos for the 3rd time, followed by Microsoft co- founder and chairman of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Bill Gates.
- The chairman & managing director of Reliance Industries Mukesh Ambani (17th) topped the Indian list, followed by the founder of Avenue Super-marts Radhakishan Damani & family (65th).

ISSUES

NATIONAL

POLITY

UNION CABINET SUSPENDS MPLAD FUND FOR 2 YEARS



Date: 8th April 2020

Union Cabinet in a recent meeting has approved an ordinance for 30% cut in the salaries of Ministers and all Members of Parliament for Financial Year 2020-2021.

Key Highlights:

- The cabinet has also decided to suspend the MP Local Area Development (MP-LAD) scheme for two years that is for financial year 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- This fund will go to the Consolidated Fund of India and will be utilized for various initiatives to fight against Corona virus
- The 30% salary cut will be applicable to Prime Minister and the Union cabinet and all MPs, including the Prime Minister, his Council of Ministers and all members of Parliament
- The ordinance has amended the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954.
- The amended salary is applicable from 1st April, 2020 and will be in effect for a period of one year.
- Although the salary cut will not be applicable to pension and allowances of MPs.
- Through MPLAD fund amount closed to Rs 8000 crore will be the part of Consolidated Fund of the country.
- As each MP is entitled to Rs 5 crore as MPLAD fund, total 10 crore fund from each MPLAD will add up to the consolidated fund.
- Different state Governments like Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan etc. had already announced different percentage of salary cuts to ministers and government employees.

ENVIRONMENT

RAJASTHAN ACCOUNTS FOR MAXIMUM ENVIRONMENT-RELATED CRIMES DURING 2014-16



Date: 9th April 2020

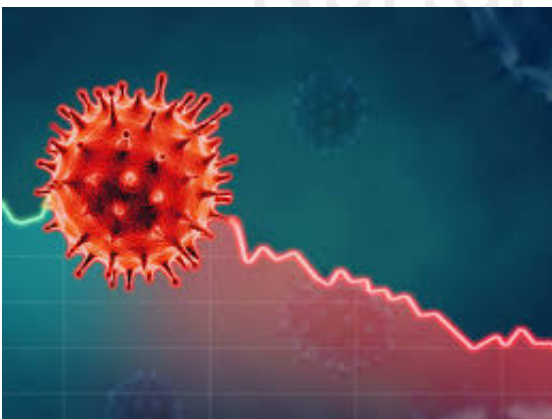
According to a report from Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Rajasthan leads the country in environment-related crimes during 2014-16

Key Highlights:

- It was reported that India's 40.59% environment-related crimes occurred in Rajasthan alone.
- Out of total 15,723 crimes related to the environment registered in the country 6,382 cases were from Rajasthan.
- These environment-related crimes were violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and Wildlife Protect Act, 1972.
- Some of these crimes were capturing, poisoning, snaring or trapping of wild animals, using of forest land for non-forest purposes without approval of government or government agencies.

SOCIAL

COVID-19 IMPACT INCOME OF 85% OF NCR HOUSEHOLDS



Date: 13th April 2020

According to a report released by National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) 85% of the households in the NCR are heavily impacted due to COVID-19 outbreak.

Key Highlights:

- According to this survey 29.3% of all households were affected by a shortage of food, cooking, fuel and medical supplies
- The data showed that casual labourers were disproportionately affected with nearly 75% stating their wages were severely affected.
- For salaried employees this percentage was 46.7%
- The survey found that only 36.4% were able to correctly identify the three main symptoms of Covid-19, that is fever, cough and breathing difficulties.
- While 95% of respondents agreed that Covid-19 was highly dangerous, 65.3% did not think there was any chance of contracting the virus themselves or for any of their household members.

INTERNATIONAL

ECONOMY

WORLD BANK FORECASTS WORST ECONOMIC SCENARIO IN SOUTH ASIA



Date: 12th April 2020

World Bank forecasts worst economic scenario in South Asia of 40 years

Key Highlights:

- According to the World Bank- South Asia Economic Focus Report, South Asian countries are facing the worst economic scenario of last four decades.
- South Asian countries including India are likely to record their worst growth performance this year due to the corona virus pandemic
- According to South Asia Economic Focus report the South Asian region is likely to show economic growth of as low as 1.8% to 2.8% this year
- The forecast is well down from the 6.3% as projected 6 months ago.
- India's economy is expected to grow 1.5% to 2.8% in the new fiscal year that started on April 1.

- World Bank also forecast sharp falls in economic growth in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- While report forecast that countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Maldives are expected to fall into recession.

HEALTHCARE

US STOPS FUNDING TO WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



Date: 14th April 2020

United States in a major decision stopped the funding to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Key Highlights:

- The United States announced to cut down the funding between values ranging from \$400million to \$500million of funding to the WHO.
- It should be noted that US is one of the largest fund contributor to the WHO
- US President has halted the funding accusing it of helping China to cover up the spread of corona virus.
- The US is of the belief that China lied about the spread and mortality rate of corona virus at face value.
- The president said that the WHO failed to investigate credible reports from sources in Wuhan city that conflicted government accounts and credible reports of human to human transmission as early as in December
- The US also accused the World health body of directly contributing to a 20-fold increase in corona virus cases across the world.
- WHO is accused of 'many' mistakes and American diplomats launched a probe into the health body's alleged failings, with the probe set to last 60 to 90 days.

HEALTHCARE

MOBILE DOCTOR BOOTH, 'CHARAK' FOR ZERO-CONTACT CHECK-UPS



DATE: 10th April

The West Central Railway's Coach Rehabilitation Workshop (CRWS) in Madhya Pradesh's (MP) Bhopal city, has created a mobile doctor booth called "CHARAK" to eliminate the possibility of physical contact between the doctor and the coronavirus (COVID-19) infected patient.

Key highlights:

- A viral barrier chamber has been built in the railway compartment itself, through which doctors will be able to examine patients without direct physical contact.
- This system will prove to be very helpful as there is a shortage of PPE (Personal protective equipment) and medical staff at this time.
- The mobile booth can go to remote villages & can also be taken up to 500 meters by hand.

INDIA'S FIRST REMOTE HEALTH MONITORING SYSTEM



Date: 10th April 2020

Key highlights:

- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Rishikesh and Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL), Bengaluru have jointly developed a remote monitoring system to combat coronavirus.
- This is the first remote health monitoring system in India.
- The remote health monitoring system remotely assesses the health of Covid suspect or patient quarantined in hospitals or at home and protects health-care staff's exposure
- In this way the health personnel and supporting staff are adequately protected from infections from patients without compromising on the health monitoring of the patient.
- The State run Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) developed the dynamic system on health related inputs from AIIMS, Rishikesh.
- BEL provided a digital and clinical solution keeping in mind shielding of health workers from being exposed to the deadly virus.
- The health monitoring system is non-invasive in nature.
- The integrated sensors in the system measure various important health parameters like temperature, pulse rate, saturated oxygen level respiration rate etc.
- It will play an important role in health monitoring of the Covid-19 infected patients during ongoing global health crisis.

ICMR EXPLORING EBOLA DRUG FOR CONTROLLING COVID-19



Date: 13th April 2020

The national medical research body, the ICMR or Indian Council of Medical Research are considering to use the antiviral drug, Remdesivir for controlling Covid-19 pandemic.

Key highlights:

- Remdesivir was used during Ebola outbreak and scientists are of the view that this drug can effectively stop the replication mechanism of Covid-19 causing virus SARS-CoV-2 that
- ICMR cited the recently published study in which Remdesivir was found to be effective and two out of three critically ill coronavirus infected patients on oxygen support through ventilators showed signs of improvement after Remdesivir administration
- According to a recently published study in the New England Journal of Medicine, two out of three critically ill coronavirus infected patients who were on oxygen support or on ventilators showed signs of improvement when they were administered remdesivir.
- All together 68% coronavirus infected patients on oxygen support through ventilators did not require ventilator support or reduced oxygen support after treating with this Ebola drug.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research is conducting research on its efficacy in the treatment of Covid-19 as a part of WHO's "Solidarity Trial".

DRDO DEVELOPS COVSACK FOR COVID-19 SAMPLE COLLECTION



Date: 14th April 2020

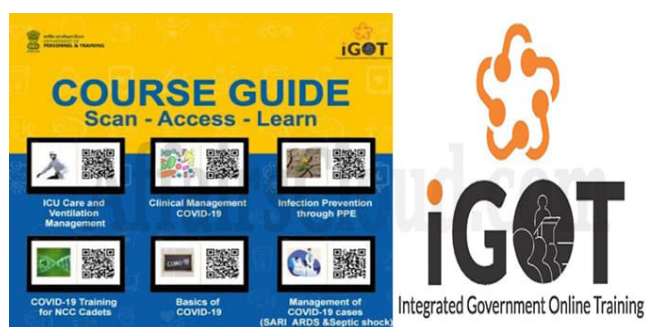
Key highlights:

- Amid efforts to strengthen the Indian health care towards better management of issues related to Covid pandemic the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) developed a new product.
- One of the DRDO's laboratory situated in Hyderabad the Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL) developed a COVID Sample Collection Kiosk (COVSACK).
- The COVSACK unit has been developed by DRDL in consultation with the medical personnel of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Hyderabad
- . The COVSACK kiosk is for use by healthcare workers for taking COVID-19 samples from suspected infected patients.
- The Patient under test walks into the Kiosk and a nasal or oral swab is taken by health care professional from outside through the built in gloves, without any direct contact with the suspected patient.
- The shielding screen of kiosk cabin protects the health care worker from the aerosols/droplet transmission.
- The COVSACK thus reduces the requirements of PPE change by health care workers without compromising any bio-safety issues.

- The Kiosk cabin is automatically disinfected through attached sprayers filled with disinfectant followed with water & UV light disinfection.
- The system is ready for next use in less than two minutes.
- It should be noticed that DRDO is also developing ventilators, PPE Units and manufactured hand sanitizers as well.

SOCIAL

CENTRE LAUNCHES 1ST OF ITS KIND IGOT E-LEARNING PORTAL



DATE: 10th April

To enhance capacity building of front line workers to effectively manage the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre under Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has launched 1st of its kind Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) e- learning portal on Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).

Key highlights:

- The platform will provide flexibility and site-based training modules so as to address the employees who need to deal with the infection.
- It is designed to the population scale, and will train about 1.50 crore workers and volunteers & can be accessed through <https://igot.gov.in>.
- The target group- Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Hygiene Workers, Technicians, Auxiliary Nursing Midwives (ANMs), Central & State Government Officers, Civil Defence Officials, various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS), Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BSG) and other volunteers. 9 courses include- Basics of COVID, ICU Care and Ventilation Management, Clinical Management, Infection Prevention through PPE, Infection Control and Prevention, Quarantine and Isolation, Laboratory Sample Collection and Testing, Management of COVID 19 Cases & COVID 19 Training.

EDUCATION

NIC, AIM, NITI AAYOG LAUNCH COLLABCAD



Date: 12th April 2020

The National Informatics Centre (NIC), Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), and the policy think tank National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog jointly launched CollabCAD.

Key highlights:

- The CollabCAD is a collaborative network, computer-enabled software system which provides a total engineering solution from 2D drafting and detailing to 3D product design.
- The aim of this initiative is to provide a great platform to students of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) across the country.
- This will help students to create and modify 3d designs with free flow of creativity and imagination.
- This software would also enable students to create data across the network and concurrently access the same design data for storage and visualization.
- The customized version of CollabCAD for ATLs with most relevant features to school students to materialize their ideas and creativity has been developed to enable designing without constraints
- These types of initiatives will help budding scientists to materialize their ideas and creativity in solving various problems.