

# Week 3 Current Affairs Update

15<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

## EVENTS

### NATIONAL

#### AGRICULTURE

#### AGRI MINISTRY LAUNCHES CALL CENTRE FOR AGRI LOGISTICS



**DATE:** 15th April, 2020

Agriculture Ministry has set up a call centre to ease the difficulties in agri logistics, particularly the inter-State movement of perishable vegetables and fruits as well as agri inputs such as seeds, pesticides and fertilisers to resolve transportation problems being faced during inter-state movement of commodities during the lockdown to contain spread of COVID-19.

#### Key highlights:

- The All India Agri Transport Call Centre, which will coordinate movement of produce and agri inputs which can be accessed at 1800-180-4200 and 14488 from any mobile or landline phone.
- The 24×7 service All India Agri Transport Call Centre is an initiative of the Union Agriculture Ministry, but will be operated by IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL) from its offices in Faridabad, Haryana.
- Stakeholders including truck drivers, traders, retailers and transporters who are facing problems in inter-State movement of commodities, can seek help by calling at the call centre.
- The Ministry also added that the subsidy of seeds under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) would be available for varieties only for 10 years old and this will be extended to seeds of all crops under NFSM required by

the North-East states, States in hilly region as well as by the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

## ENVIRONMENT

### JIM CORBETT BECOMES INDIA'S 1ST QUARANTINE CENTRE FOR ANIMALS



**DATE:** 16th April, 2020

Jim Corbett National Park, the India's oldest forested wildlife sanctuary located in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand, has become the India's 1st quarantine centre for animals with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

#### Key highlights:

- At least 10 quarantine centers are being set up within the complex to handle the corona virus prey animals & Cameras will be installed in the park to monitor the cold and cough symptoms of animals.
- The NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) has alerted the officials of country's sanctuaries, forests and zoos after the Coronavirus infection was detected in the Malayan tiger 'Nadia' in the Bronx zoo of US (United States).

## SPORTS

### MS DHONI APPOINTED AS THE BRAND AMBASSADOR OF POKERSTARS INDIA



**DATE:** 16th April, 2020

PokerStars India has appointed former Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni as its new brand ambassador.

**Key highlights:**

- MuskanSethi and Sharad Rao are the other brand ambassadors of PokerStars India, while Aditya Agarwal quit the brand in December 2019.
- Prior to MS Dhoni's appointment popular Bollywood actor Nawaz Uddin Siddiqui was the brand ambassador of the company. Currently, the brand is at rank four for player traffic among poker sites.
- PokerStars is an online poker cardroom owned by The Stars Group.
- It can be accessed through downloadable poker clients for the Windows, macOS (Macintosh Operating System), Android and iOS (iPhone Operating System).

## **SOCIAL**

### **“SURAKSHA STORES” & “SURAKSHA CIRCLE” UNDER PPP MODE SET UP**



**DATE:** 17th April, 2020

In order to provide daily essentials to Indian citizens during the extended lockdown, the government has planned to set up 20 lakh retail shops through public-private partnership (PPP) namely 'Suraksha Stores' across India in the next 45 days.

**Key highlights:**

- In this regard, the neighbourhood Kirana (general) stores will be converted into sanitized retail outlets selling daily essentials while adhering to safety norms such as social distancing to control the spread of the novel coronavirus.
- 50 top private Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies have been approached to implement this plan, which seeks to ensure that proper protocol is followed in the entire supply chain.
- An online training certification programme will be created for Suraksha Stores and Suraksha Circle to ensure awareness about COVID-19 protocols for the supply of essential commodities as per the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

## HDFC BANK LAUNCHES SAFETY GRID CAMPAIGN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING



**DATE:** 17th April, 2020

The HDFC Bank (Housing Development Finance Corporation Bank) has launched Safety Grid campaign which was conceptualized by Leo Burnett India to help people maintain social distancing as prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO) while waiting at shops during Lockdown.

### Key highlights:

- It has created physical makers on the ground using the outer grid of its logo at a distance of 1 meter from each outside the outlets like pharmacies, grocery stores, Automated teller machines (ATMs) among others.
- The campaign has been implemented in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune, Chandigarh and Bhubaneswar at 1,750 essential services stores & will be implemented at over 4,000 essential services stores across the 8 cities.

## IT

## MHA ISSUED ADVISORY ON SECURE USE OF ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM



**DATE:** 18th April, 2020

Cyber Coordination Centre (CyCord), under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has issued an advisory to safeguard private individuals who use the video-conferencing app, Zoom for private purposes like a meeting platform & states that it is not for use by government officers/officials for official purposes.

### Key highlights:

- Set new user ID and password for each meeting, Enable meeting room, Disable join before host, Allow screen sharing by host only, Disable allow



removed participants to re-join, Restrict or disable file transfer option, Lock meeting once all attendees have joined, Restrict the recording feature, End meeting (and not just leave, if you are the administrator).

- The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (Cert-In) has been informed that it is not a safe platform on February 6 and March 30, 2020. Taiwan becomes the 1st country to ban it from government business over cyber security concerns on April 7, 2020.

## ART & CULTURAL

### UNION MINISTRY LAUNCHES THE NATIONAL LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage



**DATE:** 19th April, 2020

Prahlad Singh Patel, the Union Minister for Culture, Independent Charge, launched recently the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India in New Delhi.

#### Key highlights:

- The aim of this launch is to create awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage sites from different states of India at national and international level and ensure their protection.
- This list is a part of the vision 2024 of the Culture Ministry & has been built in collaboration with SangeetNatakAkademi (SNA) and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA).
- This list has been classified into 5 categories based on the UNESCO's mandate which includes Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage, Performing arts, Social practices, rituals and festive events, Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and Traditional craftsmanship.

- The present intangible cultural heritage traditions in the list have been collected from the projects approved under the scheme for 'Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India' created in 2013 by the Ministry of Culture.

## TRADE & COMMERCE

### TVS MOTOR ACQUIRES NORTON MOTORCYCLES



**DATE:** 19th April, 2020

TVS (ThirukkurungudiVengaramSundram) Motor Company Ltd, an Indian multinational motorcycle company, has acquired the 122-year-old iconic British company Norton Motorcycle (UK) Ltd for Rs 153 crore (£16 million).

#### Key highlights:

- TVS now owns some of the UK properties of Norton in administration through one of its overseas subsidiaries, TVS Motor Singapore Pte. Ltd.
- It would be one of the most interesting deals of the historic motorcycle brand in recent times and would reflect India's rapidly growing prominence & TVS Motor Company in the international two-wheeler market.
- TVS has also tied up with BMW Motorrad i.e. BMW G 310R and BMW G 310 GS are being manufactured at the TVS plant itself.
- Along with this, TVS also has its own motorcycle based platform TVS Apache RR 310.

## HEALTHCARE

### PORTABLE SENSOR TO DETECT HEAVY METAL IN WATER



Centre for Nano and  
Soft Matter Sciences



**DATE:** 20th April, 2020

A team of researchers led by Dr. Pralay K. Santra at the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), an autonomous research institute based in Bengaluru (Karnataka), has developed a portable compact solid-state sensor to identify the heavy metal ions such as lead ( $Pb^{2+}$ ), mercury and cadmium in water up to 0.4 parts per billion (ppb).

**Key highlights:**

- Health hazards associated with heavy metal ions in water demands the development of efficient and portable sensors for rapid detection ions causing potential threats to living beings.
- The quantum dots used in this sensor can also be stimulated / activated through a small ultraviolet light (254nm) that can be captured in the hand, due to which it can be easily used even in remote areas.

**FCI ALLOWED TO CONVERT SURPLUS RICE TO ETHANOL: GOVERNMENT**



**DATE:** 22nd April, 2020

The National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) meeting under the chairmanship of Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas has approved & allowed Food Corporation of India (FCI) to convert the available surplus rice to ethanol so as to utilize it in making alcohol-based hand-sanitizers & also for the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme.

The government has also recently allowed sugar companies and distilleries to make hand sanitizers using ethanol. The sugar companies supply ethanol to oil marketing companies for blending with petrol.

**COVID-19 TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS**



**DATE:** 16th April, 2020



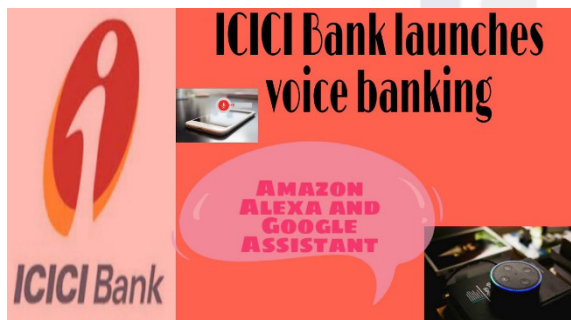
The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has announced a training program on COVID-19 from April 17 for healthcare professionals from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries.

**Key highlights:**

- The training will be carried out by the Central Government's Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.
- It is to take forward the Prime Minister's (PM) 'Prepare Not Panic' for 'SAARC fights Corona'.
- India has proposed to set up a common electronic for all the member nations so as to share expertise & best practice to jointly combat the spread of the COVID-19.
- India has suggested that the health professionals of the member nations come together to fight the coronavirus pandemic at the India-initiated video conference of SAARC leaders on March 15.

## **BANKING**

### **VOICE BANKING SERVICES ON AMAZON ALEXA, GOOGLE ASSISTANT LAUNCHED**



**DATE:** 21st April, 2020

ICICI bank has launched voice assistance-based banking services on its integrated artificial intelligence (AI) powered multi-channel chatbot iPal with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant for its retail banking customers by which they can access a wide range of banking services like check balance, seek credit card details & ask queries through voice commands.

**Key highlights:**

- The customers to access this need to download the Alexa/Google Assistant and link their ICICI Bank account through a secure 2 factor authentication process.
- It has introduced WhatsApp chat-based ICICI Stack on March 17 2020, to provide a continuous banking service for retail and business customers.
- It offers nearly 500 services that cover almost all banking requirements which includes digital account opening, loan solutions among others.



## SPORTS

### CHINA RELEASES 4TH ASIAN PARA GAMES 2022 MASCOT AS 'FEIFEI' BIRD



**DATE:** 17th April, 2020

The organizing committee of Hangzhou Asian Games, has released 'FeiFei' the bird as an official mascot for 4th Asian Para Games 2022, which is scheduled to be held in Hangzhou, China from 9 – 15 October 2022.

#### Key highlights:

- The design inspiration of "Feifei" comes from the motif of the 'Divine Bird' in the Liangzhu Culture and represents both Hangzhou city's heritage and its innovation in technology.
- The first 'fei' of the mascot represents the birds flying, implying inclusiveness, respect, and fraternity of human society, whereas the 2nd 'fei' represents the mental tenacity of the athletes with disabilities pursuing dreams and reaching beyond themselves.
- The bird's body features "i" (intelligence) on its crown, and it also shows the characteristics of Hangzhou's Internet city.
- It also has 45 dots circle on its chest which represents the joyful gathering of Asian Paralympic Committee's (APC) members, while the Games logo is in the centre.
- It flashes a blue light when exercising & happy.

## SPACE

### SCIENTISTS DISCOVERS EARTH-LIKE PLANET 'KEPLER-1649C'



**DATE:** 18th April, 2020

A team of scientists at the US (United States) space agency NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), has discovered an Earth-size exoplanet, called Kepler-1649c, orbiting in its red dwarf star's habitable zone.

**Key highlights:**

- It was spotted while observing old data of its Kepler space telescope, which the agency retired in 2018.
- Kepler-1649c is located 300 light years away from Earth & is only 1.06 times larger than the Earth.
- Its approximate temperature is the same as that of the earth and so it takes 75 % of its energy from its sun as our planet does.
- According to NASA, this planet orbits a small red star and this is the reason that the chances of life of this planet in the environment are challenging as red dwarf stars are very common in the Galaxy.
- The findings have been published in the Astrophysical Journal Letters & lead author of the study was Vanderburg, a researcher at the University of Texas at Austin, US.

# PEOPLE

## NATIONAL

### TRADE & COMMERCE

#### VINEET ARORA



**DATE:** 17th April 2020

**WHY IN NEWS:** He has been appointed as MD & CEO of Paytm General Insurance

#### **Key Highlights:**

- Paytm, a major digital payment system and financial service platform has appointed Vineet Arora as the Managing Director (MD) & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Paytm General Insurance Limited (Ltd).
- Earlier he served as the MD & CEO of Aegon Life Insurance Company and was part of the India Leadership team.
- Prior to this, he was senior general manager and head of Product, Distribution, Marketing and Wealth Management at ICICI Securities Ltd, where he developed a profitable distribution business across various delivery channels.

### ART & CULTURE

#### SUDHA MURTY



**DATE:** 21st April

**WHY IN NEWS:** She authored the book titled “How the Onion Got Its Layers”

**Key Highlights:**

- The book is being released in its e-book and audio form for young children and it is published by Puffin.
- Sudha Murty is an Indian engineering teacher, Kannada and English author.
- She serves as the Chairperson of the Infosys Foundation and a member of the public health care initiatives of the Gates Foundation.
- She is the recipient of the R.K. Narayan Award for Literature (2006), the Padma Shri (2006) and the Attimabbe Award from the Government of Karnataka for excellence in Kannada literature (2011).

**INTERNATIONAL**

**SPORTS**

**TAMAS AJAN**



**DATE:** 17th April 2020

**WHY IN NEWS:** He has resigned from the post of President of IWF

- International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) President Tamas Ajan, 81 years old, resigned in the wake of allegations of corruption and doping violations.
- Ursula Papandrea will be the acting president of IWF.
- Tamas Ajan is from Hungary, had been at the IWF since 1976, serving 24 years as general secretary and 20 years as president.



# ISSUES

## NATIONAL

### NOMURA PREDICTS CONTRACTION OF INDIA'S GDP BY 6.1 %



**Date:** 14th April 2020

The famous Japanese brokerage predicted that India's GDP will contract by 6.1% in June quarter

#### Key Highlights:

- The expansion in GDP is likely to expand only in the last quarter of this year.
- The global pandemic has resulted into severe economic slowdown In Indian economy along with the world.
- The likely economic impact had resulted in the RBI advancing its bi-monthly policy review meet by a week and slashing rates by 0.75% and easing out liquidity in late March.

## HEALTHCARE

### ICMR FOUND BAT CORONAVIRUS STRAIN IN INDIAN BATS



**Date:** 15th April 2020

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in a study has found the presence of a different kind of coronavirus in Indian bats.

**Key Highlights:**

- The two species of Indian bats were found to be infected with Bat Coronavirus (BtCoV).
- The species of bats, Rousettus and Pteropus species from states like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu were found positive for BtCoV.
- It is to be noted that Pteropus bat species were earlier found positive for Nipah virus in 2018 and 2019 in Kerala.
- But to a big relief these bat Coronaviruses have no relation with SARS-CoV2 responsible for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
- It is suspected that the recently emerged severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) also has its association with bats in China.
- The study highlighted that the need for active and continuous surveillance remains crucial for outbreak alerts for bat-associated viral agents with epidemic potential for timely interventions.

**CHINESE COVID-19 RAPID TEST KITS FOUND TO BE FAULTY**



**Date:** 21st April 2020

**Key Highlights:**

- Many states in India questioned the efficacy of Rapid Testing kits for coronavirus brought in from China
- One of these states is Rajasthan, which now has refused to use these kits.
- Rajasthan and other states conducted tests with these kits in the Covid-19 hotspots, but these kits marked those patient negative who have already tested positive for coronavirus by reliable methods like RT-PCR
- In Rajasthan only 5.4 per cent of the tests have proved effective
- This raised the credibility of these Chinese manufactured rapid test kits

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked states to hold off the use of the Kits until the matter is resolved
- Beijing has denied the kits are of inferior quality.
- The ICMR was against the widespread rapid tests, advocating its use only as a screening process in hotspots.
- Many states still do not have adequate testing facilities for the current RT-PCR tests, which rely on swabs from the patients.
- The RT-PCR tests have to be processed in a laboratory and takes up to 6 hours, while a rapid test gives the result within 30 minutes.

## ECONOMY

### INDIA WITNESS HIGHEST DROP IN EXPORTS



**Date:** 16th April 2020

The global pandemic by novel corona virus has also hit enormously blow to Indian merchandise exports.

#### Key Highlights:

- In March 2020, the overall shipments dropped to 34.57%.
- The trade experts termed this as the highest drop in exports in recent years.
- The blow was not limited to exports but the imports as well.
- In March 2020 the Imports dropped over 28 %
- The merchandise trade deficit narrowed to 9.76 billion USD in March 2020 from 11billion USD in same period last year.
- According to Ministry of Commerce and Industry ,the decline in exports has been mainly due to the ongoing global slowdown along with the Cov-id-19 pandemic
- The pandemic aggravated the already slowed down economy which resulted in large-scale disruptions in supply chains and demand
- According to trade experts recovery is only expected after the second quarter of the 2021 financial year.

### HEALTHCARE

## SURVEY OF INDIA DEVELOPS INTEGRATED GEOSPATIAL PLATFORM



**Date:** 17th April 2020

The Survey of India develops integrated geospatial platform named SAHYOG

#### Key Highlights:

- SAHYOG geospatial platform was created from the available geospatial datasets, standards-based services and analytic tools.
- This will help in decision making during the ongoing Covid-19 scenario as it supports area-specific strategies to handle the socio-economic impact in the recovery phase.
- The SAHYOG mobile application will complement the Aarogya-Setu mobile application launched by the Government of India for contact tracing, public awareness & self-assessment objectives.
- The Aarogya-Setu app notifies the user via smartphone location data & Bluetooth if any Covid infected with person is within 6 feet radius.
- This integrated geospatial platform will strengthen the Nation's health emergency management through the seamless provision of spatial data, information, and linkage between human, medical, technological, infrastructural and natural resources.
- In different states, Spatial Data Infrastructure (SSDI) have been providing collateral standards-based geospatial data services to the State and District Level Authorities in Covid-19 management.



## HEALTH MINISTRY LAUNCHES COVID INDIA SEVA



**Date:** 21st April 2020

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare launched COVID India Seva facility.

### Key Highlights:

- This facility will provide an interactive platform to establish a direct channel of communication with millions of Indians amid this
- The initiative taken by the health ministry initiative is aimed at enabling transparent e-governance delivery in real-time
- It will also provide queries to the citizens especially in ongoing pandemic situation in almost real time.
- Trained experts will respond to authoritative public health information and will directly communicate with citizens.
- The Covid India Seva works off a dashboard at the backend that helps process large volumes of tweets and converts them into resolvable tickets.
- These tickets/queries are then assigned to the relevant authority for real-time resolution.
- The real time application is expected to be used by millions of Indians.

## TRANSPORT

### TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS MINISTRY LAUNCHES DASHBOARD



**Date:** 20th April 2020

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has created a dashboard link on its website for providing list and details of dhabas(eateries) and truck repair shops

**Key Highlights:**

- The complete list is available across the country by various organisations like NHAI, States, Oil Marketing companies.
- This is important in view of the lockdown across the country and the smooth Inter-state transport of goods
- This is intended to facilitate the truck / cargo drivers and cleaners in their movement
- It is need of the hour to provide information about repair shops and dhabas for those carrying out transport as for them this is required during their duty.
- These Dhabas and repair shops, drivers, helpers or any other person in the chain of movement of goods have to follow all the necessary precautions like social distancing, use of masks etc.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### INDIAN SCIENTISTS DEVELOP ELECTRO-CATALYST USING FISH GILLS



**Date:** 21st April 2020

Indian Scientists developed a low-cost electro-catalyst from fish gills.

**Key Highlights:**

- This can be used in the development of environmentally friendly energy conversion devices.
- This low-cost electro-catalyst was developed by Scientists at the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali.
- INST is an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

- An electrocatalyst participates in electrochemical reactions and help to modify and increase the rate of chemical reactions without being consumed in the process.
- The bio-inspired carbon nanostructure used by scientists at INST can help overcome the bottleneck in the realization of several renewable energy conversion and storage technologies
- These conversion and storage technologies include fuel cell, biofuel cell, metal–air battery etc.
- These bio-inspired electrocatalysts are better than commercial Platinum on carbon catalyst
- This type of biocatalyst development can pave a new way for exploring highly active low-cost electrocatalyst for efficient and environmentally friendly energy conversion devices.

