

Week 4 Current Affairs Update

22th - 30th April 2020

EVENTS

NATIONAL

SOCIAL

MHRD E-LAUNCHES VIDYADAAN 2.0 PROGRAM ON DIKSHA PLATFORM



DATE: 24th April

To invite e-learning content contributions, the Union Human Resource Development Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' e-launched VidyaDaan 2.0 program on DIKSHA platform. VidyaDaan 2.0 program has a content contribution tool that provides a structured interface for the contributors to register and contribute different types of content like explanation videos, teaching videos, practice questions, competency-based items, lesson plans etc. for any grade from 1 to 12 and for any subject as specified by the states/UTs under their respective projects. The contribution can be made by individuals, teachers, educationists, subject experts, schools, government and non-government organisations etc after registering & nominating themselves. The program will soon be inviting contributions for Teacher Training material.

SCIENCE-TECH

CSIR-IGIB DEVELOPS "FELUDA" A LOW-COST CORONA VIRUS TEST STRIP

FELUDA-CRISPR TEST: COVID-19



DATE: 24th April

The Scientists at Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-IGIB) has developed “Feluda” a low-cost coronavirus test strip which will not require any expensive machines & is a simple way of detecting Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-coV2). This kit is developed by Debojyoti Chakraborty and SouvikMaiti& the total time required for the test is less than an hour.

Feluda gets its name after the detective character in legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray’s stories as it will detect the presence of a virus in just a few minutes. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and University of California, Berkeley also use CRISPR, but with different technologies, they have named the tests as ”Detector” and ”Sherlock”, so Feluda was named as an Indian version. It starts the same way as a normal real-time Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR), which is the extraction of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and its conversion to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). In the RT-PCR tests, the RiboNucleic acid (RNA) is converted to DeoxyriboNucleic Acid(DNA) by using specific primers and probes, with fluorescent reporters, to amplify and detect viral nucleic acid presence & requires expensive Real-Time PCR machines which are available at specialised sites. RT-PCR’s price is capped at Rs 4,500 in private labs but the ‘Feluda’ test will cost as little as Rs 500.

SPORTS

MirabaiChanu and Jeremy Lalrinnunga qualifies for Tokyo Olympics confirmed by IWF



DATE: 24th April

The President of Weightlifting Federation of India (WFI) Shadav Yadav confirmed that MirabaiChanu and Jeremy Lalrinnunga have been qualified to participate in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games due to their current International rank. In the Olympic qualification process, for each weight class 14 lifters will be qualified with a maximum

of one lifter per country per category apart from the top 8 lifters in the IWF ranking list and the highest rank lifter in each continent will also qualify. Jeremy placed 22nd in the 67kg category in the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) ranking list and he is the top rank lifer in Asia and Mirabai ranked 4th in the 49kg category. In the video conference of Executive board of IWF on 17-18 March recommended that to close the qualification process since the five continental championships were cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic and the selections were made with the current world rankings. Mirabai took part in five events out of six mandated in the qualification rules and since she is in the 3rd spot in the world rankings she automatically qualifies to the Olympic Games.

HEALTH

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES “APTHAMITRA” TO COMBAT COVID-19



DATE: 24th April

The chief minister of Karnataka, B S Yediyurappahas launched “Apthamitra” helpline toll free number and an application to empower the people to fight against coronavirus pandemic. The app provides required medical guidance for the people in need. The helpline will provide service from 8 AM to 8 PM, with four helpline centers in different places in the states. The 14410 – Helpline will cover all parts of the state, The Apthamitra is a two tier system with AYUSH (Ayurveda), Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) or nursing and pharma final year student volunteer as the first tier and the MBBS, integrated Medicine or AYUSH from the respective locations as the second tier for risk assessment, counselling, telemedicine and referral for testing and treatment. The helpline is to reach out to people in the corona hotspot areas and to identify the Influenza Like illness (ILI), Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SERI) and the corona like symptoms.

SCIENCE-TECH

COVID-19: CISF LAUNCHES 'E-KARYALAY' APP FOR MOVEMENT OF FILES



DATE: 26th April

To prevent coronavirus infection, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has launched 'e-karyalay' an electronic office application to enable the movement of files and documents without physical touch. The app is designed by its in-house technical team for the usage of the 1.62 lakhs personnel & it resembles each and every function of traditional file movement. It has digital signature features to handle various securities related concerns and keep pace with existing standards. It is hosted on the CISF Cloud with all security arrangements to safeguard the data & a data recovery site is established to maintain around-the-clock services. The app gives the same visual appearance as the file with the notes on the left and all the correspondence and attachments on the right & Files can be opened, worked, parked and closed.

Since the government allows only officers above the rank of deputy secretary to go to office, holding only one-third of the manpower below this rank on a given day at work, the app will reduce the workload & will enable officials to work from home.

HEALTH

COVID PHARMA: AP LAUNCHES APP TO TRACE PEOPLE BUYING MEDICINES FOR FEVER, COLD



DATE: 30th April

The medical and health department of Andhra Pradesh has launched a mobile application, Covid Pharma, to keep track of people purchasing medicines over-the-counter (OTC) from medical stores for cough, cold and fever. Using the app, pharmacies will have to take down details of persons and their mobile numbers, who are making OTC purchases of medicines, including Paracetamol, for common ailments, and report that to the government. In the prevailing scenario, this will help us easily trace persons with any kind of likely symptoms of coronavirus. This also includes buying medicines with prescriptions. The medical shops association has consented to collect details of persons making such purchases and share those with the health department for better monitoring.

INTERNATIONAL

ECONOMY

LEBANON BECOMES 1ST ARAB NATION TO LEGALISE CANNABIS FARMING



DATE: 24th April

To boost the exports & to beat the economic crisis created by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Lebanon has legalised cannabis (also known as marijuana) farming for medicinal & industrial use. The Parliament of Lebanon has also approved the re-allocation of \$40 million from a World Bank (WB) loan to help fight COVID-19. Earlier there was ban on growing, selling and consuming cannabis. However the illicit production in the country's east fertile Bekaa Valley has developed over decades into a multi-million-dollar industry. As per the United Nations (UN), Lebanon is the 3rd largest supplier of cannabis resin in the world after Morocco and Afghanistan.

POLITY

INDIA ATTENDS PAK-HOSTED SAARC VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



DATE: 25th April

To promote great regional cooperation to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, India participated in The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) health minister's virtual conference hosted by Pakistan. The meeting was chaired by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Health Services Dr Zafar Mirza and SAARC Secretary-General Esala Ruwan Weerakoon also attended the virtual conference. India was represented by Rajiv Garg, the Director General of Health Services who was assisted by experts from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Most SAARC countries were represented at the official level. During the virtual conference SAARC countries agreed to enhance cooperation in the health sector, particularly in the context of efforts to combat the virus at the regional level.

HEALTH

WB TIES-UP WITH AIMA TO ORGANIZE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP ON "CONTRACT MANAGEMENT DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS"



DATE: 26th April

To organize a virtual workshop called “The Contract Management during Emergency situations”, World Bank (WB) has joined hands with AIMA (All India Management Association). The objective of this is to create awareness about the likely impact of the coronavirus (COVID -19) pandemic. AIMA is one of the most renowned business schools in India. In 2015, world bank has funded \$ 250 Million to Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP) in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The Project Management Unit is currently executing this project.

International

POLITICAL

APEC REGION TO POST 2.7% ECONOMIC CONTRACTION IN 2020 DUE TO COVID-19: REPORT



DATE: 29th April

As per the report ‘APEC in the Epicentre of COVID-19’ released by the APEC Secretariat, due to the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region’s growth is expected to decrease by 2.7% in 2020. The contraction, which is the most significant fall since 2009 global recession, compares with a 3.6 % growth in 2019. However, the Secretariat expects an economic revival at 6.3 % in 2021 based on effectiveness of containment mechanisms & exceptional fiscal measures for better economy. This forecast will be higher than the projected global economic growth of 5.8 %. Apart from this, unemployment rate in APEC region is estimated to increase to 5.4 % in 2020 as compared to 3.8 % in 2019, means an additional 23.5 million workers in the region being unemployed in 2020. In view of COVID-19, the 2020 APEC economic forum and leaders’ summit host Malaysia has delayed meetings. It will likely to held in November 2020.

SPORTS

PCB BANS UMAR AKMAL FOR THREE-YEARS FOR MATCH-FIXING



DATE: 30th April

Pakistan batsman, Umar Akmal was banned for three-years by the Pakistan Cricket Board(PCB) Disciplinary Committee for the violation of ICC Anti-corruption code 2.4.4 failing to disclose the details of approaches to engage in corrupt conduct and 2.4.5 failing to disclose any incident that comes to the knowledge of any evidence that another participant received any approaches to engage in corrupt conduct. The Chairperson of the Disciplinary panel Justice(retired) Fazal-e-Miran-Chauhan handed the three-year ban to Umar Akmal from all cricket effective from February 20. He was also suspended from the Pakistan Super League (PSL) on 2nd February with two charges under the anti-corruption code by the PCB for failing to report the approach to fix the games. He mentioned that he was approached during the ICC World Cup in 2015 edition played in Australia and New Zealand and once he was offered 200,000 dollars for leaving two deliveries in the matches against India.

International

SCIENCE-TECH

UNIFIED GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE MOON: RELEASED BY US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



DATE: 27th April

The scientists from USGS (United States Geological Survey) Astrogeology Science Center, in collaboration with NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and the Lunar Planetary Institute have virtually released the first ever digital, unified, global, geological map of the moon namely “Unified Geologic Map of the Moon”. S Harrel, a NASA Space Grant student, mapped the surface features of the moon which included crater rim crests, buried crater rim crests, fissures, grabens, scarps, mare wrinkle ridges, faults, troughs, rilles, and lineaments while the researchers built on the original digital renovation of the six 1:5,000,000-scale lunar geologic maps comprising of the near, central far, east, west, north and south sides that was released in 2013. Data from recent satellite missions to the moon and resources data from NASA’s Apollo Missions were also used to come up with the map.



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PEOPLE

INTERNATIONAL

HEALTH

KIRAN MAZUMDAR-SHAW



DATE: 29th April

WHY IN NEWS: She has recognised among world's top 20 inspirational leaders in Biopharma

According to the Medicine Maker Power List 20 for 2020 report, published by The Texere Publishing Ltd, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is among world's top 60 inspirational leaders under three categories viz. Small Molecules, Advanced Medicines, and Biopharmaceuticals. At present she is the executive Chairperson of Biocon Ltd. In 1989, she was awarded Padma Shri and in 2005 she was conferred by Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.

NATIONAL

ECONOMY

SHIV DAS MEENA



DATE: 30th April

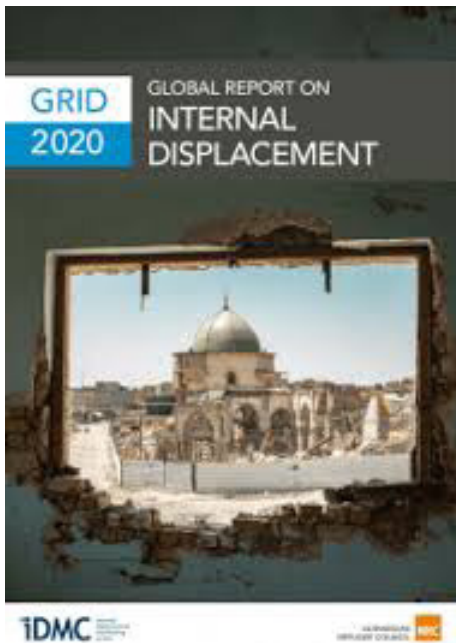
WHY IN NEWS: He has been appointed as Chairman & Managing Director of HUDCO

A 1989 batch IAS officer of Tamil Nadu Cadre, Shiv Das Meena was appointed to hold the additional charge of Chairman and Managing Director of Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) Ltd, for six months or till the appointment of a regular incumbent to the post, effect from 21st April 2020. At present he is the Additional Secretary of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).



REPORTS & INDICES

GRID 2020 REPORTS INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT OF OVER 5 MILLION IN INDIA AND 33 MILLION WORLDWIDE



Date: 28th April 2020

According to the latest Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID 2020) over 5 million people have displaced in India in 2019.

Key Highlights:

- This is the highest Internal Displacement in the world.
- The report mentions displacement of over 33 million worldwide
- Conflicts and disasters are the main factors behind this type of displacements.
- Around 75% of the disasters were triggered by disasters. Out of these, 95% were due to weather hazards such as floods and storms.
- GRID 2020 reported displacement of 2.6 million people in India due to south west monsoon.
- About 20000 suffered displacement in the country due to conflicts and majority of them from West Bengal and Tripura.
- Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020 (GRID 2020) is released by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
- It is the official repository of data and analysis on internal displacement.

- GRID report breaks down data by conflict, violence and disasters across 145 countries.
- The report looks at policy and operational practice from across the world and shows what is being done by countries to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement.
- GRID2020 proposes a roadmap for the next decade based on better information, more resources and stronger political investment.
- The report Key Highlights examples from countries trying to address internal displacement and discusses the main ingredients for future practice to bring about durable solutions and lasting change.

ECONOMY

CRISIL LOWERS INDIA'S FINANCIAL PROGRESS RATE



Date: 28th April 2020

The Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited (CRISIL) had lowered its projections for the financial progress price of India to 1.8%.

Key Highlights:

- It's earlier prediction for the year 2020-21 was 3.5%
- CRISIL had a gross domestic product (GDP) growth estimate of 6 % for 2020-21 (FY21), which was revised to 3.5% in late March.
- Its parent company Standard & Poor's (S&P) has also predicted the world economy to contract by 2.4 %, against its earlier estimates of 0.4% growth.
- India and China are the only exceptions to the declining economic activities in 2020 among the other major economies.
- The agency projects the lockdown due to COVID-19 Pandemic to cause a total loss of Rs 10 trillion.
- CRISIL is an Indian analytical company providing ratings, research, and risk and policy advisory services
- It is a subsidiary of American company S&P Global.

SPACE

GIANT ASTEROID SET TO PASS CLOSE TO EARTH



Date: 29th April 2020

A giant 1.5 mile-wide asteroid is set to pass within 3.9million miles of Earth.

Key Highlights:

- Although the asteroid known as 1998 OR2 passes very closely to earth it ‘poses no danger to planet’ as informed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration(NASA).
- It is important that the asteroid is classified as a potentially hazardous object (PHO)
- An asteroid is categorised as a PHO, if it is bigger than 500ft and comes within 5million miles of Earth’s orbit.
- The 1998 OR2 is big, but it is still smaller than the asteroid that impacted the Earth and wiped out the dinosaurs.
- Presently there are no known potentially hazardous objects that pose an immediate danger to the Earth.
- Scientists will continue to monitor the asteroid, although the next closest approach is not expected to take place in coming 49 years.

INDIA LIKELY TO DOWNGRADE BY MOODY INTO 'BAA3' CATEGORY



Date: 30th April 2020

The renowned International ratings agency Moody's Investors Service is likely to downgrade India to Baa3 'stable' from Baa2 'negative'.

Key Highlights:

- The reason behind this is expected in the backdrop of coronavirus outbreak and lockdowns that have derailed fiscal discipline in the country.
- This prediction was made by the Japanese brokerage firm Nomura
- After downgrading to Baa3 'stable' from Baa2 'negative' it will be on par with S & P and Fitch
- Both S&P and Fitch rate India at BBB negative (BBB-)
- The brokerage firm also predicted that Fitch could also change outlook on India to negative due to deteriorating debt dynamics and its assessment that India has a poor fiscal track record.

The ratings downgrade to sub-investment grade could dent prospects for India bond flows in the medium term.

- There are limited implications for the rupee from a Moody's downgrade but there is a risk from a shift to negative outlook by the other two rating agencies.
- There is imminent danger of India's sovereign rating to come under pressure if there is further deterioration in fiscal outlook as a result of lower growth or fiscal easing.

APEC REGION GROWTH TO DECREASE BY 2.7%



Date: 27th April 2020

The economic decline in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region is expected to be 2.7% in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key Highlights:

- The fall is said to be the most significant one since the 2009 global financial crisis when APEC recorded a near-zero growth rate.
- It is contrast to the 3.6% economic growth recorded in 2019.
- The unemployment rate is also alarming as it projected to rise to 5.4 % in 2020 as contrast to 3.8 % in 2019.
- This is said to be make 23.5 million more workers being unemployed in 2020.
- Although effective measures to stimulate the economy and containment of any further Covid-19 wave can create expected economic rebound in 2021
- The anticipated growth during that period is said to be around 6.3 %
- The strong 21 APEC members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the US and Vietnam.



IT

E-GRAM SWARAJ PORTAL AND MOBILE APP LAUNCHED ON PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY



Date: 24th April 2020

An integrated e-Gram swaraj Portal & Mobile app was launched by the Prime Minister On the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day.

Key Highlights:

- The integrated e-Gram swaraj Portal & Mobile app was launched with an aim to accelerate the pace of development in Indian villages.
- The Portal and app is expected to help the villagers of the country to keep all kinds of information on their smartphones.
- This initiative is also dubbed as the beginning of digitization of panchayats.
- This unified portal is a key initiative of Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- The app will also provide the Gram Panchayats with a single interface to prepare and implement their Gram Panchayat Development Plan.
- National Panchayati Raj Day is the national day of Panchayati Raj System in India celebrated by Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 24 April every year.

IIT PROFESSOR DEVELOPS AI BASED SOFTWARE FOR COVID-19 DETECTION



Date: 27th April 2020

A professor at prestigious IIT-Roorkee has developed software that can detect Covid-19 infection in patient.

Key Highlights:

- Professor Kamal Jain from civil engineering department has claimed that this artificial intelligence (AI)based software can detect COVID-19 comparing X-rays of a probable patient's lungs with scans of thousands confirmed cases
- The software can help in accurate preliminary screening which can be supplemented by clinical testing.
- This (AI)-based software database was developed after analysing over 60,000 x-rays of Covid-19, pneumonia and T.B. patients.
- There is different level of chest congestion in these 3 diseases and it can form the basis of detection.
- The software will not only reduce testing costs but will also less risk of exposure to healthcare professionals.

SHORT VIDEO APP 'VMATE' JOINS 'MYGOVINDIA' FOR COVID-19 INFORMATION



Date: 28th April 2020

The Short video app VMate has joined hands with the Government's citizen engagement platform MyGov to support the Central Government efforts against the spread of Coronavirus pandemic.

Key Highlights:

- An official profile of the entity, named MyGovIndia, has been launched on VMate to cater official information related to the novel virus outbreak.
- Through the official profile, VMate users can now get first hand real-time information from the government about various government decisions related to Covid-19 .
- The first video posted on the profile talks about Aarogya Setu, a mobile application developed by the Government of India to connect essential health services with the people of India in the combined fight against Covid-19.
- MyGov citizen engagement platform aims at promoting citizen participation in governance and developmental activities undertaken by the government.
- Through this initiative that VMate users in remotest parts of the country get easy access to official announcements and information.
- Prior to this launch VMate had launched a profile titled 'Myth Buster', which furnishes WHO-sourced information related to the pandemic in an interactive and animated format for general citizens of the country.

HEALTHCARE

Glenmark Pharma receives DCGI approval for clinical trials of Favipiravir



Date: 29th April 2020

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals become the first company in India to receive approval from Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) to conduct clinical trials of Favipiravir.

Key Highlights:

- The Favipiravir antiviral tablets are undergoing clinical trials for the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

- Favipiravir is a generic version of Avigan of Fujifilm Toyama Chemical, Japan
- Favipiravir has demonstrated activity against influenza viruses and has been approved in Japan for the treatment of novel influenza virus infections.
- The company has internally developed the active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and the formulations for the product,
- The Glenmark after getting approval will conduct the trials on mild to moderate patients.
- As per the standard clinical trial protocol , 150 subjects with mild to moderate COVID-19 will be randomised in the study in a 1:1 ratio to Favipiravir with standard supportive care or standalone standard supportive care.
- Treatment duration is a maximum of 14 days and the total study duration will be maximum for 28 days from randomization.

INDIAN SCIENTISTS DEVELOP ALZHEIMER DRUG



Date: 30th April 2020

Indian Scientists develop an Alzheimer drug which will prevent the spread the severity of the disease.

Key Highlights:

- Scientist at the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre For Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru developed the Alzheimer inhibitor drug.
- The team led by Prof. T. Govindaraju has modified the structure of a natural product called Berberine into Ber-D to use as an Alzheimer's inhibitor.
- The Berberine is a commercially available cheap natural product similar to curcumin and a prospective biomolecule in disease inhibition.
- Ber-D is found to be a multifunctional inhibitor of multifaceted amyloid toxicity of Alzheimer's disease.

- This research work has been published in the illustrated scientific journal Science.
- Alzheimer is one of the most prevalent neurodegenerative disorder
- The disease accounts for more than 70% of all dementia related disorders.
- The multifactorial nature of the disease attributed to multifaceted toxicity has made it difficult for researchers to develop effective medication.
- The Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) is an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India



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