

Week 3 Current Affairs Update

15th - 21st September 2020

EVENTS

NATIONAL

REPORTS & INDICES

NO ANTIBODIES FOUND IN 30% OF RECOVERED COVID-19 PATIENTS: SERO SURVEY REPORT



Date: 16th September

As per a sero-prevalence survey conducted in Delhi in the first week of August, no antibodies were found in 30 % of the recovered COVID-19 patients, the sero-prevalence survey found that 79 of the 257 people who recovered from COVID-19 did not have antibodies against the virus.

The survey exercise was undertaken for a comprehensive assessment of the COVID-19 situation in the national capital and to formulate strategies based on its findings.

Key Findings Survey

- Around 15,000 representative samples were taken in sero survey conducted during August 1-7 from 11 districts and tested for antibodies (IgG) against the virus.
- The blood samples of 257 people who had tested COVID-19 positive earlier and then recovered, were also taken during the survey to test if they had antibodies.
- Among these, 79 people were found to have no antibodies against the virus.
- The samples were collected from different areas, age groups, gender and economic class.

- In the sero-prevalence survey conducted in Delhi covering the entire August, 29.1 % of the people were found to have antibodies against COVID-19 infection. Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain had announced the results late last month.
- Among the total samples surveyed, the prevalence of antibodies found in males was 28.3 %, and in females 32.2 %. Hence, it was found that females were more likely to develop antibodies against COVID-19.
- Among the total samples surveyed, 25 % were taken from the age group below 18 years, 50 % from the 18-49 years age bracket and the remaining 25 % from those who fall in the age group of 50 years or more.

What is Sero Survey?

- The sero survey means to conduct the testing of blood samples of people to detect the presence of antibodies against any infection. The survey is carried out to identify people who have been infected and have now been recovered.

HEALTH

“FELUDA”- CRISPR BASED HIGH ACCURACY, LOW COST COVID-19 TEST GETS DCGI APPROVAL



Date: 21st September

The Drugs Controller General (DCGI) of India has approved the commercial launch of ‘Feluda’, the Tata CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) COVID-19 test.

Key Highlights

- The Tata CRISPR test achieves accuracy levels of traditional RT-PCR tests with quicker turnaround time, less expensive equipment and better ease of use.
- CRISPR is a genome editing technology to diagnose diseases.
- The technology has been developed by CSIR-IGIB (Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology).
- The Tata CRISPR test is the world’s first diagnostic test to deploy a specially adapted Cas9 protein to successfully detect the virus causing COVID-19.

BILLS & ACTS

PARLIAMENT PASSES EPIDEMIC DISEASES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020



Date: 22nd September

On 22nd September 2020, the Parliament passed the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020, ensuring the protection of the health workers. The bill was passed by Rajya Sabha on September 19, 2020.

Key Highlights

- The bill amends the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 to include the protection of health care service personnel combating epidemic diseases as well as expands the power of the central government to prevent the spread of such diseases.
- The bill passed in the parliament repeals the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance that was promulgated in April 2020.
- The legislation makes injury, harm, danger, or hurts to the life of the health care service personnel as a cognizable and non-bailable offense.
- The bill also has the provisions of imprisonment from three months to five years and a fine between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 2,00,000.
- Persons who will be convicted of offenses under the bill will be liable to pay compensation to the health care service personnel who they have hurt.

LOK SABHA PASSES FOREIGN REGULATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020



Date: 22nd September

On 21st September 2020, the Lok Sabha passed the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 that seeks to streamline the provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 by enhancing transparency and accountability in the receipt and utilization of the foreign contribution.

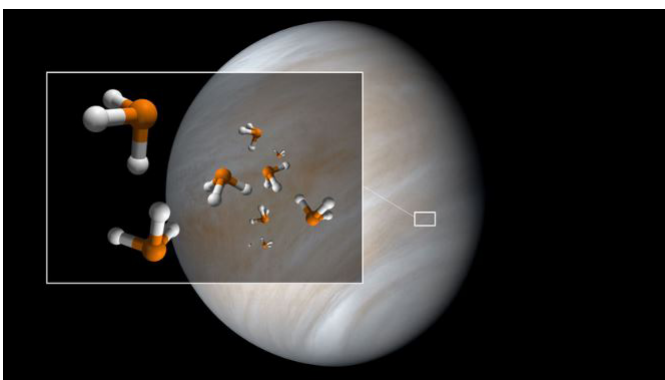
Key Highlights

- The amendments in the act seek to bar public servants from receiving foreign funding. It also aims at making Aadhar mandatory for all the office bearers of NGOs or other organisations who have been seeking foreign contributions.
- The bill in Lok Sabha seeks on limiting the foreign funds received under FCRA for administrative purposes from the current limit of 50% to 20%.
- As per the government, the amendments aim to streamline the provisions of FCRA by enhancing transparency and accountability and strengthening the compliance mechanism in the receipt and utilisation of the foreign contributions that are worth thousands of crores every year.
- As the bill has been passed, no organisation will now able to transfer foreign contributions to any person/association under Section 7 of FCRA. The bill now empowers the government to ask a violator to not use the funds by holding a ‘summary inquiry’.

INTERNATIONAL

SPACE

SCIENTISTS DETECT POTENTIAL SIGNS OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE ON VENUS



Date: 15th September

Scientists have detected potential signs on life on the inhospitable Venus. The scientists have detected a gas called phosphine in the acidic clouds of Venus that indicates microbes may inhabit Earth's neighbour.

The researchers noted that phosphine is produced by bacteria thriving in oxygen-starved environments on the Earth.

Key Highlights

- The presence of Phosphine was first spotted in Venus clouds by an international scientific team using the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope in Hawaii. The researchers later confirmed the discovery using the ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array) radio telescope in Chile.
- The study was published in the scientific journal - Nature Astronomy.
- NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine tweeted saying that the discovery of phosphine is the most significant development yet in building the case for life off Earth.” He further added that it is time to prioritize Venus.
- According to the study’s co-author Clara Sousa-Silva, the most plausible explanation for finding phosphine on Venus is the existence of extraterrestrial life.
- Phosphine is a flammable, colorless and explosive gas at ambient temperature that has the odor of garlic or decaying fish.

POLITY

BEATING CHINA IN ELECTION, INDIA BECOMES MEMBER OF UN’S COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN



Date: 15th September

On 15th September 2020, India has been elected as a member of the United Nation’s Commission on Status of Women, a body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). India will remain a member of the prestigious body for four years from 2021 to 2025. Along with India, China and Afghanistan had also contested elections to the Commission on Status of Women. While India and Afghanistan had won the ballot among the 54 members, China failed to even cross the half-way mark.

Elections for UN CSW: Key Highlights

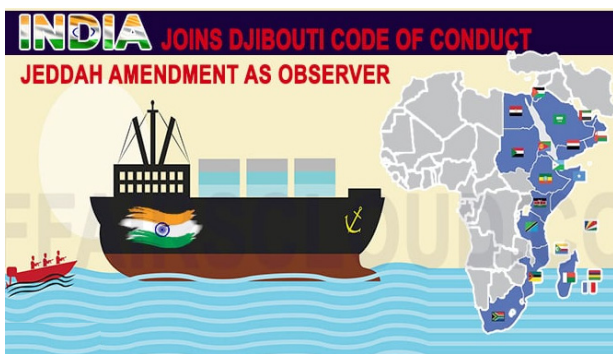
- The 54 member ECOSOC while holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in UN General Assembly Hall, held elections for 2 seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with India, Afghanistan, and China in the fray.

- Afghanistan led by Ambassador Adela Raza at the United Nations, won 39 votes while India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.
- China which is a permanent member of the UN got only 27 votes and failed to get the required majority of 28 votes.
- Afghanistan and India will be joining Austria, Argentina, Israel, Dominican Republic, Latvia, Turkey, Nigeria, and Zambia. These were elected by acclamation to CSW for the four-year term beginning from 2021-2025.
- 45 member states of the UN serve as the members of the commission at any one time.

What is the role of the UN's Commission on Status of Women?

United Nation's Commission on Status of Women is the principal global intergovernmental body. It is exclusively dedicated to the promotion of women empowerment and gender equality. CSW is the functional commission of ECOSOC. It was established by ECOSOC resolution 11 (II) of June 21, 1946.

INDIA JOINS DJIBOUTI CODE OF CONDUCT AS OBSERVER



Date: 17th September

On 26th August 2020, India has joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment as Observer following the high-level virtual meeting of the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA). India looks forward to working together with DCOC/JA member states towards coordinating and contributing to enhanced maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region. The DCOC/JA is a grouping on maritime matters comprising 19 member states adjoining the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region. India has joined Japan, Norway, the UK and the US as Observers to the DCOC/JA. The Djibouti Code of Conduct is a regional maritime security cooperation agreement established by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 2008.

In particular, the signatories to the Code agreed to co-operate in:

- (i) The investigation, arrest and prosecution of persons reasonably suspected of having committed acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships, including those inciting or intentionally facilitating such acts.

- (ii) The interception and seizure of suspect ships and property aboard such ships.
- (iii) The rescue of persons, ships and property subjected to piracy and armed robbery. Facilitation of proper care, treatment and repatriation of the fishermen, seafarers and other personnel and passengers aboard the ship subject to such acts.
- (iv) The conduct of shared operations among signatory States as well as and with the naval forces of countries outside the region – such as nominating law enforcement or other authorized officials to embark on patrol ships/aircraft of another signatory.

What is the Jeddah Amendment?

In a high-level meeting of the signatories' countries of the Djibouti Code of Conduct in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 2017, all signatory nations agreed to adopt a revised code of conduct- Jeddah Amendment. The revised code of conduct is referred to as Jeddah Amendment to DCOC 2017.

INDIA, BRAZIL, SOUTH AFRICA JOINTLY CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE REFORMS OF UNSC



Date: 18th September 2020

India, Brazil and South Africa jointly called comprehensive reforms of the UN Security Council at the IBSA Foreign Ministers' virtual meeting. The customary meeting of IBSA Foreign Ministers was chaired by Union External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar and attended by his Brazilian counterpart Fabio Marzano and South African Counterpart Grace NalediMandisaPandor.

Key Highlights

- The three ministers in their joint statement emphasized on the need for the international community to redouble efforts to achieve tangible progress for accelerated and comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council and expansion of its membership by including representation from emerging and developing countries.

- The joint statement read that the representation, in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, should be for achieving a representative, inclusive, equitable, responsive, and effective UN Security Council.
- While highlighting that there has been some progress in international efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the UN system, the ministers reiterated that advancing reforms of the Security Council should remain an urgent and key priority.
- The joint statement further read that the failure to reform the Security Council will have serious implications for international peace and security.
- The Ministers added saying that significant and accelerated reform is critical to ensure that the UNSC is more representative, effective and responsive and remains capable of delivering on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.
- Further, three ministers expressed dissatisfaction on the transparency and frustratingly slow pace of reforms in the Inter-Governmental Negotiations process and insisted that the time has come to move towards a result-oriented process with substantive negotiations based on a single comprehensive text in a formal setting.



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Nurturing Ambitions

PEOPLE

NATIONAL

OBITUARY

KESAVANANDA BHARATI



Date: 6th September

WHY IN NEWS: He passed away recently

Kesavananda Bharti, the head seer of Edneer Mutt in Kerala since 1961 passed away. He was famous for initiating the historic judgement of Supreme Court that “Basic Structure of Constitution” cannot be amended by the Parliament.

Highlights

- The Kerala Government had passed a land law with an objective to distribute land to the landless farmers.
- Kesavananda Bharti challenged the Kerala Government in 1970 on this Kerala land reforms legislation.
- He contended that the land reforms passed by the Kerala Government will impose restrictions on management of the mutt property that was the only source of income.
- The petition filed by Bharati challenged three Constitutional Amendments 24, 25 and 29 that were passed by the Indira Gandhi Government to give power to the Parliament to change the fundamental rights.
- According to Bharti, the amendments breached his fundamental rights as follows
 - ❖ Article 25: Right to practice and propagate religion
 - ❖ Article 26: Freedom of religious denomination (managing and administering property)
 - ❖ Article 31: Right to property

EDUCATION

AYUSHMAN KHURRANA



Date: 12th September

WHY IN NEWS: He has been appointed as UNICEF's celebrity advocate in India. In a recent move, UNICEF (United Nations International Children Education Fund) appointed AyushmannKhurrana as its celebrity advocate for promoting and supporting its work around ending violence against children.

Highlights

- The actor will work towards ending violence against children especially in the current scenario when COVID-19 risk has blanketed the whole world.
- AyushmanKhurrana will spread awareness and bring the child issue in light for public debates. The special focus will be towards ending violence and abuse against the child.
- In the recent wake of times, extended lockdown and socio-economic impacts of the global pandemic has worked as a catalyst for child abuse and violence.
- Before this in past, Sachin Tendulkar in the year 2013 has also advocated the UNICEF in India.

POLITY

YOSHIHIDE SUGA



Date: 16th September

WHY IN NEWS: He has been elected as the 99th Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihide Suga, who won the leadership vote of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been elected as Japan's new Prime Minister by the powerful House of Representatives on September 16, 2020.

About Yoshihide Suga

- Yoshihide Suga has been serving as the Chief Cabinet Secretary in the current administration and he was widely expected to win the elections.
- The New Prime Minister's immediate focus will be on reviving the battered economy while keeping the effect of COVID-19 under control.
- Yoshihide Suga will be the oldest Prime Minister to take office since Kiichi Miyazawa in 1991.
- He had won the vote for the presidency of the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) by a large margin, taking 377 of a total of 534 votes from lawmakers and regional representatives.



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REPORT & INDICES

INDIA'S ECONOMY TO SHRINK BY 9 PER CENT IN 2020: ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK



Date: 15th September

On 15th September 2020, The Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced that India's economy is expected to contract by 9% in 2020-worse than the 4% contraction which the bank had forecasted three months ago. In the first quarter of the Current Fiscal Year, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had contracted by a record 23.9% as the COVID-19 lockdown stalled business and consumer spending.

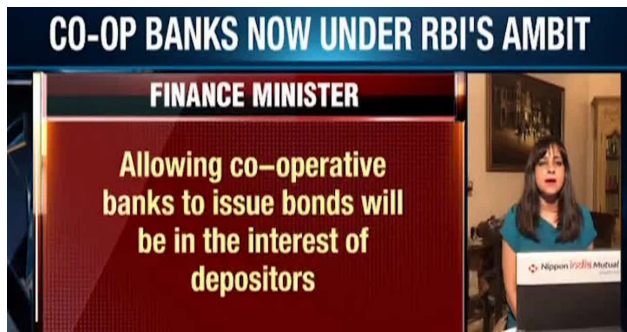
Key Highlights

- The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 Update for elsewhere forecasts minus 0.7% GDP growth for the developing Asia in 2020, which marks its first negative economic growth since the early 1960s.
- It expects India to bounce back with 8 % growth next year as the country begins to emerge from the economic devastation caused by coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.
- In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, India's GDP contracted by a record 23.9 % as lockdowns stalled consumer and business spending.
- Growth will rally to 6.8 % in 2021, in part because growth will be measured relative to a weak 2020.
- About three-quarters of the region's economies are expected to post negative growth in 2020.
- China is one of the few economies in the region bucking the downturn. It is expected to grow by 1.8 % this year and 7.7 % in 2021 with successful public health measures providing a platform for growth.

- Sub-regions of developing Asia are expected to post negative growth this year except for East Asia which is forecast to expand by 1.3 % and recover strongly to 7 % in 2021.

BANKING

LOK SABHA PASSES BILL TO BRING COOPERATIVE BANKS UNDER RBI



Date: 17th September

The Lok Sabha on September 16, 2020 passed an amendment bill to the Banking Regulation Act to bring cooperative banks under the supervision of the RBI. The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 14, 2020. The Bill amends the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. The Banking Regulation Act, 1949 regulates the functioning of banks and provides details on licensing, management and operations of banks.

Objective

The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was passed in a bid to protect the interest of the depositors. Under the amendment bill, multi-state cooperative banks and urban cooperative banks will be brought under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India.

Features of the Bill

- RBI may, after placing a bank under moratorium, prepare a scheme for reconstruction or amalgamation of the bank to secure its proper management, or in the interest of depositors, the general public or the banking system.
- The Amendment Bill allows RBI to initiate a scheme for reconstruction or amalgamation without imposing a moratorium. If a moratorium is imposed, the Bill adds that banks cannot grant any loans or make investments in any credit instruments during the moratorium.
- Further, the bill provides that a co-operative bank may issue equity, preference, or special shares on face value or at a premium to its members or to any other person residing within its area of operation. It may also issue unsecured

debentures or bonds or similar securities with maturity of ten or more years to such persons. Such issuance will be subject to the prior approval of the RBI.

- Under the bill, no person will be entitled to demand payment towards surrender of shares issued to him by a co-operative bank.
- The Act states that RBI may supersede the Board of Directors of a multi-state co-operative bank for up to five years under certain conditions. The Bill adds that in case of a co-operative bank registered with the Registrar of Co-operative Societies of a state, RBI may supersede the Board of Directors after consultation with the concerned state government, seeking their comments within such period as specified by it.

Background

In June 2020, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the ordinance to bring 1,482 urban and 58 multi-state cooperative banks under the supervision of the central bank.

INTERNATIONAL

POLITY

INDIA STORMS OUT OF SCO MEETING AFTER PAKISTAN PROJECTS CONTROVERSIAL MAP



Date: 16th September

On 16th September, India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval stormed out of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's virtual meeting of national security advisors, after Pakistan displayed its controversial map, which India calls "fictitious", violating the agenda of the gathering.

Key Highlights

- Moeed Yusuf, the Pakistani representative at SCO meet, deliberately projected the new fictitious political map of Pakistan that the Pakistani PM Imran Khan had released on August 4, 2020.

- The Pakistani map claims all of the entire erstwhile state of J&K, which is now organised into 2 separate union territories, and some parts of Gujarat as a part of Pakistani territory.
- The map was used as the background image for the meeting by Pakistan.
- The Indian delegation led by NSA Ajit Doval strongly objected to Pakistan's attempt to project the illegal map showing Indian Territory as its own.
- The chair of the meeting, Russia tried very hard to persuade Pakistan not to display the map and expressed hope this provocative act will not affect India's participation in SCO.

RIGHT TO PROTEST NOT AN ABSOLUTE RIGHT, IT IS SUBJECT TO CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS: SC



Date: 22nd September

On 21st September 2020, the Supreme Court observed that the right to protest is not an absolute right and it comes with certain restrictions. The court stated that while there is no dispute that citizens have the right to protest, a balance has to be maintained between the right to protest and the right to mobility for others.

Right to Protest has to be balanced with Right to free movement: SC

- The apex court observed that it is not disputing the right to protest but it has to be balanced with people's right to free movement.
- The top court stated that the key issue is where and how and how long such protests can go on, and what about the right to use the road or public place.

There cannot be a universal policy on right to protest: SC

Upon receiving a suggestion for forming a universal standard policy on Right to Protest, the Supreme Court stated that there cannot be a universal policy. The court added that in a parliamentary democracy like India, there is an avenue of debate, the only issue is in what manner and where and for how long and how to balance it.



POLITY

GOVERNMENT PROMOTED ONLINE LEARNING TO MITIGATE EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Date: 17th September

The Union Government has allocated more than Rs. 818 crores to promote online learning in order to alleviate the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on education.

Steps taken by Govt. to promote digital learning:

- Internet access under Bharat Net Scheme has been made available to the government institutions as well as to improve internet connectivity in rural areas.
- Diksha Platform, PM e-Vidya, Manodarpan, and E-textbooks rationalization of the syllabus for examination were also started for the benefits of the students.
- The Ministry of Education has been providing 24 educational TV Channels covering educational content for schools and the higher educational institutions.
- The Ministry of Education has allocated Rs. 304 crores for training the members of School Management Committees (SMC) on COVID-19 awareness.
- The Ministry has also allocated Rs. 153 crores for media and community mobilization.
- 51 crores have been allocated for safety and security at the school level.

