

Week 3 Current Affairs Update

16th - 20th March 2021

EVENTS

NATIONAL

GOVT. APPOINTS TEAM TO REVIEW MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR KUMBHMELA



Date: 16th March 2021

The Central Government deployed a high-level team to Haridwar for reviewing the medical care and public health arrangements for KumbhMela. It is scheduled to be held from April 1 to April 30, 2021.

Key highlights

- The team will focus on the status of the implementation of the SoP (Standard Operating Procedure) for KumbhMela.
- The team will also be reviewing the implementation of its field-level recommendations that have been given to the state during its last visit in February 2021.
- Earlier the Uttarakhand government had decided to limit the mela to just 30 days from earlier 3 months. The decision was taken to prevent the spread of Coronavirus infection by reducing the duration of the pilgrimage.
- To control the spread of Covid infection, Govt. has made passes mandatory for the pilgrims. As per the rules, the passes to the pilgrims will be issued only after they have submitted the negative RT-PCR test.
- All the devotees will also have to register themselves first on the web portal of KumbhMela 2021.

Background:

KumbhMela is one of the largest mass gatherings. The pilgrimage is celebrated 4 times over a course of 12 years. The mela spans around 4 different locations in India- Haridwar, Prayag, Nashik, and Ujjain.

ENVIRONMENT**VEHICLE SCRAPPING POLICY INTRODUCED**

Date: 20th March 2021

The Union Minister, Nitin Gadkari introduced the Vehicle Scrapping Policy in the Lok Sabha on March 18, 2021. The policy aims to create an eco-system to phase out old, unfit and polluting vehicles.

Highlights

- 51 lakhs of light motor vehicles that are more than 20 years old will be scrapped under the scrapping policy.
- 34 lakhs of light motor vehicles are older than 15 years and about 51 lakhs of light motor vehicles are older than 20 years.
- He also noted that roughly 17 lakh medium and heavy commercial vehicles are older than 15 years without valid fitness certificates.
- Increased fees for fitness certificates and fitness tests may be applicable for commercial vehicles from 15 year onwards from the date of initial registration.
- The key aim is to phase out vehicles that are older than 15 or 20 years to reduce urban pollution levels. Under the policy, private vehicles will be de-registered after 20 years if found unfit, while commercial vehicles will be de-registered after 15 years in case of failure to meet the fitness requirement.

MANIPUR DECLARED AS MODEL STATE FOR VAN DHANVIKASYO-JANA



Date: 20th March 2021

Manipur has been declared as a winner state where the government's Van Dhan-VikasYojana has appeared as a major source of employment for the local tribals residing in the state.

Highlights:

- With the active participation and cooperation of the Manipur government at every level, the kendras of Manipur have turned out to be a model enterprise for the rest of the country.
- The TRIFED nodal office, along with the support and the implementing agencies from the district administration and other stakeholders, has been extremely instrumental in mentoring the tribal entrepreneurs in Manipur through team meetings, training, workshops, advocacy.
- Various skill development and cluster-wise training and the up-gradation for the value addition of NTFPs were organised.
- The entrepreneurial management at the district level was also organised through the collaboration of the existing companies such as Meira Foods, Zingran Foods, ThangjamAgro Industries, and Kangla Foods.

THE MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL



Date: 21st March 2021

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 seeks to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 and increase the upper limit of legal abortions to 24 weeks for special categories of women.

Key Features

- The Bill, 2020 proposes requirement for an opinion from one provider for termination of pregnancy up to 20 weeks of gestation and introducing the requirement of opinion from two providers for termination of pregnancy up to 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- The bill proposes increasing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women such as vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and others such as differently-abled women and minors.
- Under the amendment bill, the upper gestation limit will not apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by the Medical Board. The composition, functions and other details of the Medical Board will be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act.
- Further, the name and other details of the woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised by the law.

JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN: CATCH THE RAIN' CAMPAIGN



Date: 22nd March 2021

The Catch the Rain Campaign has been implemented from March 22 to November 30 during the pre-monsoon and the monsoon period in the country.

PM Modi launched the 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain' campaign. The campaign was launched on World Water Day which is also celebrated on March 22.

Key Highlights

- The Catch the Rain Campaign will be implemented from March 22 to November 30 during the pre-monsoon and the monsoon period in the country.
- The campaign will be launched as a Jan Andolan for taking the idea of water conservation and preservation at the grassroot level through the people's participation.

- The campaign aims at nudging all the stakeholders to create rainwater harvesting structures suitable to the subsoil strata and the climatic conditions and for ensuring proper storage of rainwater.

DEFENCE

OPERATION SANKALP



Date: 20th March 2021

The Indian Navy undertook the Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Royal Bahrain Naval Force Corvette Al Muharraq under Operation Sankalp in the Persian Gulf.

Highlights

- The naval exercise aims at promoting interoperability between the two navies. It also reflects the commitments of both Bahrain and India to build cooperative partnerships in meeting the emerging maritime challenges.
- The Maritime Security Operations, code-named as Operation Sankalp, was initiated on June 19, 2019, after the attacks on the merchant ships in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.
- The Op Sankalp was launched by the Indian Navy in the light of the rising tension in the Gulf of Oman where the 2 oil tankers were attacked. The US had blamed Iran for the attacks, which heightened the tensions between the two nations.

SPORTS

SHOOTING PARA SPORT WORLD CUP



Date: 22nd March 2021

Singhraj, the Indian para-athlete has won a gold medal in the 2021 Para Shooting World Cup at Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates on March 21, 2021. Singhraj defeated Uzbekistan's Server Ibragimov by 2.8 points and got the top honour in the P1- Men's 10m Air Pistol SH1 final.

Highlights

- The Indian Shooter Singhraj after winning the gold medal stated that he is happy to win the gold medal after such a long time. He added that while coming to the World Cup he was sure to get a good result as he had trained and practiced very hard during the Coronavirus lockdown.
- He further informed that his first international was in Al Ain in UAE in 2018 but he missed out on the gold at the time.
- In the year 2019 as well, he had to settle for the silver medal but now he wants to continue further with this momentum and aims at getting a good result in Tokyo 2020.

FILM

NATIONAL FILM AWARDS 2019



Date: 23rd March 2021

The 67th National Film Awards were announced on March 22, 2021. The National Film Awards 2019 were announced by the Chairman of the Feature Films Jury N Chandra. The National Film Awards ceremony was supposed to be held in May 2020 but was delayed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Important List of Winners

Best Feature Film: Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea (Malayalam)

Best Actress: Kangana Ranaut for Panga (Hindi) and Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi (Hindi)

Best Actor: Manoj Bajpayee for Bhonsle (Hindi), and Dhanush for Asuran (Tamil)

Best Director: Sanjay Puri for Singh (Hindi)

Best Child Artist: Naga Vishal for KD (Tamil)

Best Choreography: Maharishi (Telugu), Raju Sundaram

Best Cinematography: Jallikattu (Malayalam), GireeshGangadharan

Special Jury Award: OththaSeruppu Size 7 (Tamil), RadhakrishnanParthiban

Best Film Category Awards

Best Hindi Film: Chhichhore

Best Malayalam Film: KallaNottam

Best Tamil Film: Asuran

Best Telugu Film: Jersey

Best Punjabi Film: Rab Da Radio 2

Best Bengali Film: Gumnaami

Best Marathi Film: Bardo

Best Kannada Film: Akshi

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

INDIA-JORDAN JOINT WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD



Date: 16th March 2021

The first India-Jordan Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand cooperation in the field of Manpower was held through a video conference on March 10, 2021.

Key Highlights

- The India-Jordan Joint Working Group meeting provided an opportunity to discuss and review the labour and manpower cooperation-related issues between the two countries.
- The delegations from two countries agreed on institutionalizing measures to promote and protect the rights of the workers and settlement of labour issues.
- The delegation from Jordan expressed positive sentiments towards Indian workers and professionals and the contribution they have made to regional development.

INDIA AND KUWAIT TO ESTABLISH JOINT COMMISSION



Date: 20 March 2021

The Governments of India and Kuwait, decided to establish a Joint Ministerial Commission. It will formulate a framework for strengthening ties in the sectors such as trade, energy, investment, information technology, and manpower and labour.

Highlights:

- The Commission between India and Kuwait will be tasked to formulate the required basis for strengthening ties between two nations in areas of energy, economy, trade, human resources, investment, finance, manpower and labour, IT, culture, education, health, defence, and security.
- The External Affairs Minister of India also invited more investments from Kuwait into India in the fields such as infrastructure, energy, healthcare, food security, and education.
- During the meeting, both sides emphasized the need for enhancing cooperation in the area of health security.

ENERGY

ITALY JOINS INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE, SIGNS FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT WITH INDIA



Date: 19th March 2021

Italy has signed a framework agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) with India recently.

Key Highlights

- The Agreement was signed by the Ambassador of Italy Vincenzo De Luca.
- During the meeting, the Foreign Secretary also discussed the G20 Presidency of Italy which it currently holds.

- ISA is an alliance of over 120 nations that have been initiated by India.
- It was jointly launched by the French President and Prime Minister Modi during the United Nations Climate Change Conference, 2015 or COP21, in Paris, France.
- The alliance aims at contributing to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the massive and rapid deployment of sustainable solar energy.

POLITY

US PASSES LAW TO REAUTHORISE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT



Date: 19th March 2021

The US House of Representatives passed a legislation to reauthorise the Violence against Women Act (VAWA), which was originally introduced by President Joe Biden but lapsed in 2019.

What is the law about?

- The legislation seeks to provide grants to state and local governments for programs addressing violence against women including domestic abuse, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.
- The law will close the so-called boyfriend loophole to prevent dating partners convicted of domestic violence or abuse from buying or owning guns.
- As per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 44 percent of women in the US have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetimes, along with about 25 percent of men.

IBSA HELD 6TH WOMEN'S FORUM MEETING



Date: 19th March 2021

The 6th edition of India-Brazil- South Africa women's forum meeting took place via video conferencing.

Key Highlights:

- The forum is committed to inclusive sustainable development for achieving the well-being of their citizens as well as for those from developing nations.
- The forum discussed major issues that contribute towards the transformation of women's lives.
- It highlighted the initiatives, best practices, policies for the gender-inclusive economy for the change as well as for the elimination of violence against women and gender-based discrimination.
- It also emphasized the need to raise voices on various multilateral forums for highlighting the development priorities of the associate nations as well as for emphasizing how gender equality makes sound economic sense.
- About IBSA:
- The India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trilateral Cooperation Forum is a very unique platform that brings together three major economies and large democracies from three different continents.



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PEOPLE

INTERNATIONAL

OBITUARY

JOHN MAGUFULI



Date: 18th March 2021

Why in News: He was Tanzanian President, passed away at the age of 61 years on March 17, 2021.

Key Highlights:

- Tanzanian President John Pombe Magufuli passed away at the age of 61 years. Tanzanian Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan shared, "It is with deep regret that I inform you that today on the 17th of March, 2021 at 6:00 pm we lost our brave leader, the President of the Republic of Tanzania, John Pombe Magufuli."
- John Pombe Magufuli was elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time in 1995.
- He had run for President for the first time in 2015 and was re-elected in a vote in 2020. The Elections were called fraudulent by opposition presidential candidate Tundu Lissu.
- Magufuli came in on the platform of fighting corruption and empowering the masses.
- In 2020, his government had introduced a new law, which made it a punishable offense for local media to publish international content without authorisation.

APPOINTMENT

BILL NELSON



Date: 21st March 2021

Why in News: Nominated as NASA administrator

Key Highlights:

- Bill Nelson started his political career by serving in the Florida House of Representatives from 1972 to 1978. He later served in the US House of Representatives from 1979 to 1991.
- He was elected to the US Senate three consecutive times from 2001 to 2019.
- He became the second sitting member of Congress to fly to space after Jake Garn in January 1986.



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ISSUES

INTERNATIONAL

SOCIAL

FRANCE, GERMANY, SPAIN & ITALY TEMPORARILY HALT ROLL-OUT OF ASTRAZENECA'S COVID-19



Date: 16th March 2021

France, Germany, Spain and Italy have become the latest European nations to temporarily halt the use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine over blood clot concerns

Key Details

- The Health Ministry of the above mentioned Govts. stop the vaccine roll-out. It is a temporary precautionary suspension till the risks are evaluated by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).
- The temporary suspensions have been announced despite EU's medicines regulator reiterating that the countries should continue their AstraZeneca vaccine rollout.
- The World Health Organisation, the EMA and AstraZeneca have repeatedly stated that there is no evidence of a link between the vaccine and blood clotting and that the rollouts should continue while the reports are being investigated.

Background

Austria had suspended the use of a batch of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine on March 8, 2021 after a nurse died of "severe blood coagulation problems" days after receiving the vaccine.

AWARD & HONOUR

INDIA ANNOUNCES MUJIBUR RAHMAN FOR GANDHI PEACE PRIZE 2020



Date: 23rd March 2021

The Gandhi Peace Prize 2020 has been conferred by the Indian government on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. PM Modi announced the award and mentioned that Rahman was one of the greatest leaders of the Indian subcontinent.

Key Highlights

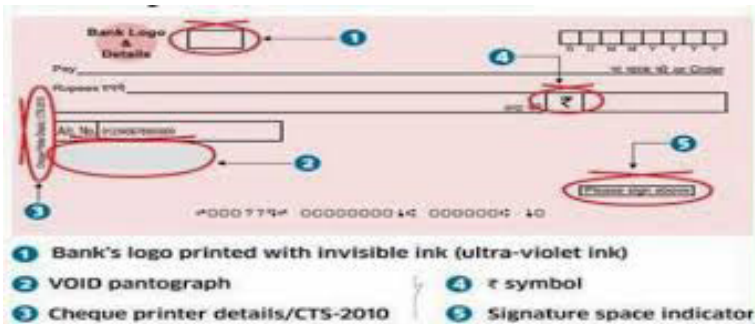
- The announcement of the Gandhi Peace Prize has come ahead of PM Modi's much-anticipated visit to Bangladesh on March 26, 2021.
- The jury for the prize was chaired by PM Modi and also comprised of the two ex-officio members, namely the leader of the single largest opposition party in Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of India.
- The award also carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a plaque, and a citation.
- The jury of the prize met on March 19, 2021, and unanimously decided to select Bangabandhu as the recipient of the prize for 2020.
- Gandhi Peace Prize is an annual award that has been instituted by the Indian government since 1995, the 125th birth anniversary commemoration year of Mahatma Gandhi.



IDEAS

NATIONAL

RBI DIRECTS BANKS TO IMPLEMENT IMAGE-BASED CHEQUE TRUNCATION SYSTEM



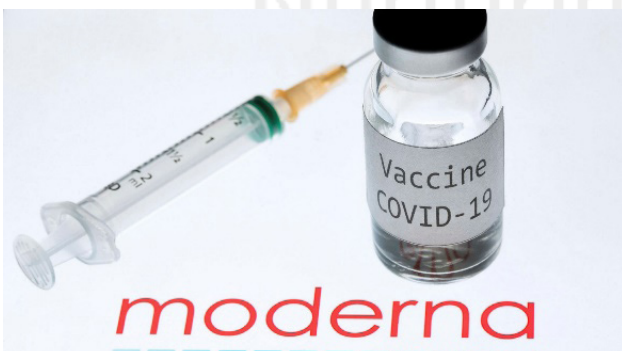
Date: 17th March 2021

Highlights:

- RBI has directed all banks to implement the image-based Cheque Truncation System (CTS) in all their branches by September 30, 2021.
- The apex bank had announced pan-India coverage of the Cheque Truncation System last month by bringing all bank branches under the image-based clearing mechanism.
- The move aims to enable faster settlement of cheques resulting in better customer service.

HEALTH

MODERNA STARTS TESTING COVID-19 VACCINE ON YOUNG CHILDREN



Date: 17th March 2021

Moderna has started testing its Coronavirus vaccine on infants and children between the ages of 6 months and 12 years. The testing has been started by the pharmaceutical company as it seeks to expand approval for its vaccine on children.

KidCOVE Study

The clinical trial by Moderna has been divided into two parts.

- In the first part, different dosages of the COVID-19 vaccine are being tested on the children.
- Children between the ages of 6 months and 1 year will receive the two doses of the vaccine at the gap of 28 days at either a 25 or 50 or 100 micro-gram level.
- The findings of part 1 will be used in determining which dose will be used in part two of the trial.
- For the second part of the KidCOVE Study, the trial will further expand to include children who have been given a saline placebo, which does nothing.
- The children will be then followed for 12 months after they receive the second injection.

INTERNATIONAL

HEALTH

RESEARCHERS DEVELOP MOLECULAR SENSOR THAT CAN IDENTIFY NEW CANCER DRUGS



Date: 18th March 2021

Researchers from India and France recently developed a molecular sensor that is capable of identifying cancer drugs by detecting how such chemicals modify microtubules inside living cells.

Key Highlights

- The research was conducted by Indian researchers from inStem, Bangalore in collaboration with the Curie Institute in Orsay, France.
- The researchers decided to overcome the shortcoming in understanding tubulin modifications by developing the first tubulin nanobody/sensor to study the dynamics of microtubule modifications in living cells and use this for identification of new cancer therapeutic drugs.
- The researchers designed synthetic proteins also known as Nano bodies that can bind specifically to modified microtubules.

