

Week 1 Current Affairs Update

1st - 7th April 2021

EVENTS

NATIONAL

POLICIES & SCHEMES

ANANDAM: THE CENTER FOR HAPPINESS



Date: 1st April 2021

The Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank inaugurated 'Anandam: The Center for Happiness' at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Jammu in a virtual manner.

Key Points:

- The centre was inaugurated to solve mental stress issues of the people, to spread positivity and bring holistic well-being.
- While addressing the inauguration ceremony, the Union Minister said that incorporating happiness in the academic curriculum is a very positive step towards empowering the nation.
- The centre follows the National Education Policy 2020.
- The centre will fulfil the objectives for which it is developed and will be completely dedicated to mental well-being.
- The 'Anandam: The Center for Happiness' is classified in 5 broad categories: Counselling, Holistic Wellness, Elective courses on happiness development, Research and Leadership and Faculty Development.

ENVIRONMENT

NEW EMISSION NORMS FOR COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS



Date: 2nd April 2021

The Central government has pushed back deadlines for coal-fired power plants to adopt new emission norms by up to three years. It has also allowed utilities that miss the new target to continue operating after paying a penalty.

Key Points:

- India had initially set a 2017 deadline for thermal power plants to install Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) units that cut emissions of sulphur dioxides.
- But that was postponed to varying deadlines for different regions, ending in 2022.
- According to the new order, plants near populous regions and New Delhi will have to comply by 2022, while utilities in less polluting areas have up to 2025 to comply or retire units.
- A task force will be constituted by the Central Pollution Control Board to categorise plants in three categories “on the basis of their location to comply with the emission norms”.
- In case of non-compliance, a penalty of up to ₹0.20 will be levied for every unit of electricity produced.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

SANKALP SE SIDDHI



Date: 2nd April 2021

“Sankalp se Siddhi” – Village and Digital Connect Drive was recently launched by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Key Points:

- It is a 100 day drive which was started from April 1, 2021.
- It will entail 150 teams visiting ten villages each.

- It aims to activate the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras in these villages.
- The visiting teams will also identify locations and shortlist potential Van Dhan Vikas Kendras for clustering as TRIFOOD, and Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries- (SFURTI) units as larger enterprises.
- TRIFOOD aims to enhance the income of tribals through better utilization of and value addition to the Minor Forest Produce collected by the tribal forest gatherers.

DEFENCE

DRDO DEVELOPED LIGHT WEIGHT BULLET PROOF JACKET



Date: 3rd April 2021

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Kanpur-based Defence Materials and Stores Research and Development Establishment (DMSRDE) have developed a lightweight bullet-proof jacket.

Key Points:

- The bulletproof jacket weighs nine kilogrammes and fulfills the qualitative standards of the Indian Army.
- The DMSRDE is one of the laboratories of DRDO.
- The jacket is developed using front hard armour panel technology. Because of this technology, the weight of a medium-sized bulletproof jacket was reduced from 10.4 kilograms to 9 kilograms.
- The front hard armour panel bulletproof jacket was tested at Terminal Ballistics Research Lab in Chandigarh.
- The jacket meets the standards framed by BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards).

POLICIES & SCHEMES

AIM-PRIME



Date: 3rd April 2021

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) of NITI Aayog launched AIM-PRIME (Program for Researchers on Innovations, Market-Readiness & Entrepreneurship).

Key Points:

- The AIM-PRIME is an initiative to support and promote science based deep tech start-ups and ventures in India.
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is the supporting agency for AIM-PRIME.
- The AIM-PRIME will be implemented by Venture Centre, which is the non-profit technology business incubator.
- Under the AIM-PRIME initiative, the tech developers and incubation managers will be given training on deep technology entrepreneurship for 1 year.
- This initiative will help tech developers and incubation managers to commercialize their deep-tech ideas.

HEALTHCARE

MIZORAM HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING PROJECT



Date: 4th April 2021

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors has approved the project for Mizoram.

Key Points:

- The project is titled 'Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project'.
- The World Bank has approved the project for USD 32 million.
- The project will help to strengthen the management capacity and quality of health services in the state.
- The 'Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project' will grant quality certified health facilities, expert human resources, health insurance schemes and other innovations in the health sector.
- The project will remove the gap which the community faces in opting for health benefits. In this regard, a cooperation with the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana will be developed under the project.
- The project will ensure 100% delivery of quality health services to the community.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

TRIFED LAUNCHED TWO CONTESTS



Date: 4th April 2021

The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Ltd (TRIFED) in association with MyGov.in has launched two interesting competitions.

Key Points:

- The two competitions are: (a) 'Be the Brand Ambassador of Tribes India' (b) 'Be a Friend of Tribes India' Contest.
- The main objective behind these competitions is to promote tribal craft, culture and lifestyle.
- Both the competitions will create awareness about tribal heritage, arts, crafts among the public.
- 'Be the Brand Ambassador of Tribes India': This contest invites stories featuring any tribal products from customers. The stories should be based on experience and details about the product. The stories should be in the form of a short video from 30 seconds to 15 minutes.
- 'Be A Friend of Tribes India': It is a quiz contest that will be held on MyGov.in from 2nd April to 14th May 2021. The winners will be awarded a Tribes India Gift Voucher, which will be valid on Tribesindia.com and all Tribes India outlets.

EDUCATION

'MYNEP2020' PLATFORM



Date: 4th April 2021

Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank launched the 'MyNEP2020' platform of NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) Web Portal.

Key Points:

- The platform is in operation from 1st April 2021 and will remain open till 15th April 2021.
- The 'MyNEP2020' platform invites inputs or suggestions or memberships from the stakeholders to frame a draft for the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and National Mission for Mentoring Program membership (NMM).
- The NPST and NMM are the two major recommendations of NEP 2020 and to frame them, NCTE will work in accordance with the suggestions from individuals or organisations.
- The suggestions and inputs received on the platform will be reviewed by an expert committee which will finally formulate the Drafts for public review. The comments will then be used to prepare a final Draft for notification.

ECONOMY

HSN CODE



Date: 4th April 2021

The ministry of finance has announced that businesses with turnover of Rs 5 crore and above will have to furnish six-digit HSN or tariff code on the invoices issued for supplies of taxable goods and services.

Key Points:

- HSN stands for Harmonised System of Nomenclature code. It is mandatory for both B2B and B2C tax invoices on the supplies of Goods and Services.
- This was introduced in 1988 by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
- This was introduced for a systematic classification of goods both national and international.
- This is a 6-digit code that classifies various products.
- India has been using HSN codes since 1986 to classify commodities for Customs and Central Excise. HSN codes apply to Customs and GST.
- The codes prescribed in the Customs tariff are used for the GST purposes too. HSN is used all over the world.
- There are different HSN codes for various commodities. HSN codes remove the need to upload details about the goods which makes filing of GST returns easier.

POLICIES & SCHEMES

LOAN FOR CANAL BASED DRINKING WATER PROJECT IN PUNJAB



Date: 5th April 2021

The World Bank (WB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) approved the loan amount for canal-based drinking water projects in Punjab.

Key Points:

- The loan amount of USD 300 million was approved for the same.
- The canal-based drinking water projects in the state will grant quality drinking water along with minimizing water losses for Amritsar and Ludhiana cities of the state.
- The project will be co-financed by IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) of the World Bank with the contribution of USD 105 million. The AIIB will contribute USD 105 million and the state government will contribute USD 90 million for the complete project.
- The source of the water for the project in Amritsar will be from Upper Bari Doab Canal.
- Whereas, the source of water for the project which will be developed in Ludhiana will be from Sirhind Canal.

HEALTHCARE

‘NATIONAL POLICY FOR RARE DISEASES 2021’



Date: 5th April 2021

The Union Health Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan has approved the ‘National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021’.

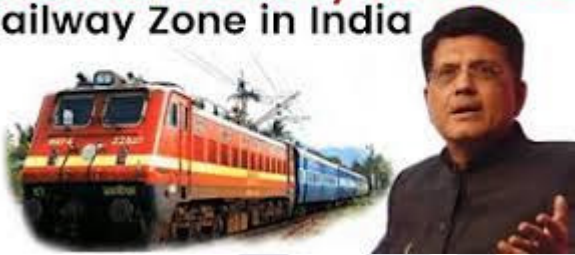
Key Points:

- The policy focuses on reducing the cost of treatment for rare diseases, by increasing focus on indigenous research and local production of medicines.
- The aim of the policy will be implemented with the help of the National Consortium which will be set up under the Health Research Department, Health Ministry as convenor.
- The policy also mentions setting up a national hospital-based registry of rare diseases, which will grant adequate data of rare diseases for research and development.
- The policy also focuses on the early screening and prevention of rare diseases through healthcare infrastructure. The screening will be supported by Nidan Kendras of the Department of Biotechnology.

TRANSPORT

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY ZONE BECOMES FULLY ELECTRIFIED

West Central Railway
becomes first fully electrified
Railway Zone in India



Date: 5th April 2021

The Indian Railways' Western Central Railway zone has become the first fully electrified railway zone in India.

Key Points:

- This has happened after the CCRS inspection and the commissioning of electrification of the Kota-Chittorgarh railway station (Srinagar-Jalindri) in Rajasthan.
- Now, the zonal railway boasts a 3012 Route Km electrified network.
- This full electrification of the railways in this particular zone will allow trains to run at a faster speed.
- This will also lead to a reduction in time required for travel and in also saving fuel.

HEALTHCARE

RAJASTHAN—FIRST STATE TO PROVIDE FREE HEALTH INSURANCE TO ALL



Date: 6th April 2021

Rajasthan has become the first state to grant free health insurance facility to all the citizens of the state.

Key Points:

- In this regard, the state government has commenced the registration process for Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme.
- Under this scheme, each family of the state will get an annual health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh.
- The scheme includes 1576 packages and the procedures to treat various diseases and illnesses.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

PHASE III OF THE ECOURTS PROJECT



Date: 6th April 2021

The eCommittee of the Supreme Court (SC) has prepared the draft vision document for Phase III of the eCourts Project under SC.

Key Points:

- E-Courts Project is a mission mode project undertaken by the Department of Justice, Government of India.
- Chairperson of eCommittee: Dr Justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, Judge, SC.
- The eCommittee has been overseeing the implementation of the eCourts Project, conceptualized under the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary-2005”.
- Phase III of the eCourts Project in India is rooted in two central facets—access and inclusion.

- Phase III envisions a judicial system that is more easily accessible irrespective of geographical distances, efficient and equitable for every individual who seeks justice, makes more efficient use of human and other resources, and absorbs the latest technology for a positive environmental impact.

REPORTS & INDICES

ALL-INDIA SURVEY OF MIGRANT WORKERS



Date: 7th April 2021

The Government of India launched the All-India Survey of Migrant Workers and All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey.

Key Points:

- Objective of the All-India Survey of Migrant Workers is to study the kind of employment-related migration undertaken by workers.
- The survey will provide the details of working and living conditions faced by Migrant Workers and impact of COVID 19 on their world of work.
- All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey will provide the employment estimates for establishments employing ten or more workers and those employing nine or less workers.
- The survey will provide crucial data on the changes in employment situation across the selected sectors on a quarterly basis.
- These surveys will plug-in the data gap on various aspects of labour and employment and will aid evidence-based policy making processes.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL ELECTION VISITORS PROGRAMME 2021



Date: 7th April 2021

The International Virtual Election Visitors Programme (IEVP) 2021 was hosted by the Election Commission of India.

Key Points:

- The programme was conducted for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and organisations from 26 nations and 3 International Organisations.
- The inaugural programme was addressed by Chief Election Commissioner, Sunil Arora.
- He mentioned that Election Management Bodies should work jointly to adopt each other's best practices and incorporate them in the elections.
- He also mentioned that the ECI will work to conduct elections in a free, fair, transparent, robust and safe manner in this pandemic situation by following the safety and social distancing norms.
- He also released the maiden issue of A-WEB Journal of Elections, which will help to bridge the gap between academics and practice in the electoral landscape.

INTERNATIONAL

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

6TH ANNUAL MEET OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF NDB



Date: 1st April 2021

The 6th annual meeting of the Board of Governors of New Development Bank (NDB) was held via video conference.

Key Point:

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman participated in the meeting.
- Theme of the meet was: New Development Paradigms: The Evolution of Infrastructure.
- The meeting was attended by the dignitaries from Brazil, China, Russia and South Africa.
- The dignitaries acknowledged and congratulated the role played by New Development Bank in last year to implement the Emergency Assistance Fund.
- They held a discussion to set up an Integrated BRICS Digital Platform and approved the Annual Financial Accounts of the Bank for 2020.
- The next annual meeting will be hosted by India in 2022.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA & JAPAN PACT FOR HEALTHCARE SECTOR UNDER GGP SCHEME



Date: 1st April 2021

India and Japan have entered into 4 agreements to support health care projects.

Key Points:

- Under these agreements, Japan will support India's health care projects which are funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GGP) scheme.
- The GGP scheme is designed to support development projects framed to meet human needs in developing countries.
- The agreements include a total amount of around 29.30 million Yen (\$ 265,000). The projects are mentioned below:
- Project (1): Provision of medical equipment at Anchal Charitable Trust of Ghaziabad, UP: For this 7.4 million yen are sanctioned.
- Project (2): Provision of eye medical equipment at Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital of UP: For this 6.8 million yen are sanctioned.
- Project (3): Provision of medical equipment at Saint Hardayal Educational and Orphans Welfare Society of Amroha, UP: For this 7.95 million yen are sanctioned.
- Project (4): Provision of eye medical equipment at Shinja Hospital, Imphal, Manipur: For this 7.2 million yen are sanctioned.

REPORTS & INDICES

WEF'S GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2021



Date: 2nd April 2021

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Global Gender Gap Report 2021. This is the 15th edition of the report.

Key Points:

- As per the report, India is ranked at 140th position among 156 countries, with a score of 0.625.
- Iceland has topped the ranking with a score of 0.892.
- The second and third positions are marked by Finland and Norway respectively.
- The report was drafted based on the evolution of gender-based gaps among 4 key factors like Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment.
- India's ranking in each of the key factors was: (a) Economic Participation and Opportunity (Rank 151) (b) Educational Attainment (Rank 114) (c) Health and Survival (Rank 155) (d) Political Empowerment (Rank 51).
- The lowest rank of 156th was attained by Afghanistan.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

WORLD IMMUNISATION AND LOGISTICS SUMMIT 2021



Date: 2nd April 2021

The HOPE Consortium's 1st 'World Immunisation and Logistics Summit 2021' was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Key Points:

- India was represented by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan in a virtual manner.
- Union Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan participated in the panel discussion of 'Focus on Asia: Vaccine production and distribution across Asia'.
- He addressed the discussion by mentioning India's vaccine administration program. He also mentioned the two vaccines against COVID 19 namely COVISHIELD and COVAXIN.
- The summit was held to boost partnership among all nations to tackle pandemic and have a healthy future for all.

DEFENCE

INDIAN ARMY TO PARTICIPATE IN 'SHANTIR OGROSHENA 2021'



Date: 3rd April 2021

Indian Army will be participating in the 'Shantir Ogroshena 2021' (Front Runner of the Peace) in Bangladesh.

Key Points:

- The 'Shantir Ogroshena 2021' is a multinational military exercise.
- The exercise is based on the theme of 'Robust Peacekeeping Operations'.
- The exercise is scheduled to be held from 4th April 2021 to 12th April 2021 in Bangladesh.
- The military forces from the United Kingdom, the US, Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Singapore will also be participating in the exercise being the Military observers.
- Along with the Indian Army, Bangladesh army, Sri Lankan Army, and Royal Bhutan Army will also be participating in the military exercise of 'Shantir Ogroshena 2021'.

REPORTS & INDICES

ACI WORLDWIDE'S REPORT ON 'PRIME-TIME FOR REAL TIME'



Date: 3rd April 2021

The ACI Worldwide in partnership with Global Data released a report titled 'Prime-Time Real Time' 2021.

Key Points:

- As per the report, India has topped with 25.5 billion transactions in the list of countries with the most real-time digital payment transactions in 2020.
- India is followed by China and South Korea at 2nd and 3rd positions respectively.

- As per the report, by 2025, India's digital payment transactions will account for 71.7% of all transactions. The transactions through cash, cheques and other forms will account for only 28.3%.
- Globally in 2020, the total number of digital transactions was 70.3 billion, which is an increase of 41% with respect to 2019.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

17TH BIMSTEC MINISTERIAL MEETING

17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held



Date: 4th April 2021

The Union External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar participated in the 17th BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Ministerial Meeting.

Key Points:

- The meeting was held virtually from Colombo, Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka held the chairmanship of the meet.
- While addressing the meeting, the Union External Affairs Minister focused on a master connectivity plan framed among South and Southeast nations, which will be finalized during the 5th edition of the BIMSTEC Leaders Summit.
- This master connectivity plan for Transport Connectivity will prove beneficial in fulfilling the aspirations of the people by granting them better connectivity and integration.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

CONSULTATION MEET OF EDUCATION MINISTERS OF E9 COUNTRIES



Date: 6th April 2021

The consultation meeting of Education Ministers of E9 countries held on 6th April 2021.

Key Points:

- India was represented by the Minister of State for Education, Sanjay Dhotre.
- The meeting is held on 'E9 initiative: Scaling up digital learning to accelerate progress towards SDG4'.
- The meeting is the part of the first of the three phases to create initiatives on digital learning skills, targeting marginalized children, youth, specifically girls.
- The dignitaries also reviewed the progress activity and the challenges being faced for digital learning and skills.
- The E9 initiative aims to boost Sustainable Development Goal 4 agenda through:
(a) support to teachers (b) investment in skills (c) narrowing of the digital divide.

ECONOMY

MOU BETWEEN SPICES BOARD INDIA AND UNDP INDIA



Date: 7th April 2021

Spices Board India and UNDP India's Accelerator Lab signed a MoU to build a blockchain based traceability interface for Indian spices to enhance transparency in supply chain and trade.

Key Points:

- It will start with over 3,000 farmers engaged in chilli and turmeric farming in select Districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- Blockchain is a decentralized process of recording transactions on an open and shared electronic ledger.
- This allows for ease and transparency in data management across a complex network, including, farmers, brokers, distributors, retailers and consumers, thus simplifying the supply chain.



PEOPLE

NATIONAL

AWARDS & HONOURS

RAJINIKANTH



Date: 2nd April 2021

Why in news: To be honoured with 51st Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Key Points:

- The legendary actor Super Star Rajinikanth has been selected to be honored with the 51st Dadasaheb Phalke Awards, the highest film honour in India.
- The iconic actor Rajinikanth will receive the Dadasaheb Phalke award for 2019 for his stupendous contribution to Indian cinema.
- Rajinikanth will receive the Dadasaheb Phalke Award on May 3, 2021.
- The legendary actor has been honoured with the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan in the past.

OBITUARY

SHASHIKALA



Date: 5th April 2021

Veteran actress Shashikala Om Prakash Saigal (née Jawalkar) passed away. She was 88.

Key Points:

- Born in Solapur, Maharashtra, she made her first big-screen appearance in the 1945 movie “Zeenat”, directed by legendary actor Noor Jehan’s husband Syed Shaukat Hussain Rizvi.

- She then appeared in supporting roles in classics like “Gumrah” (1963), “Waqt” (1965), “Anupama” (1966) and “Phool Aur Patthar” (1966) and returned to playing a vamp in the Shammi Kapoor-Sadhana-starrer “Chhote Sarkar” (1974).
- Shashikala also worked in television and was part of popular shows like Sonpari and Jeena Isi ka Naam Hai.
- Shashikala was conferred with the Prestigious Padma Shri, the country’s fourth-highest civilian award in the year 2007.
- In 2009, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the V Shantaram Awards.

APPOINTMENTS

JUSTICE N V RAMANA



Date: 6th April 2021

Why in news: Appointed as the next Chief Justice of India.

Key Points:

- Justice N V Ramana, who was recently appointed as the Chief Justice of India is to assume charge on April 24, 2021.
- He is to take charge a day after the retirement of CJI Sharad Arvind Bobde.
- Justice Ramana is to take over as the 48th Chief Justice of India.
- Justice Ramana became the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court in 2013.
- In 2014, he was appointed as the judge of the Supreme Court.

INTERNATIONAL

OBITUARY

BEVERLY CLEARY



Date: 1st April 2021

Beloved children's author Beverly Cleary passes away.

Key Points:

- Beloved children's author Beverly Cleary passed away.
- She was named a Living Legend in 2000 by the Library of Congress. In 2003, she was chosen as one of the winners of the National Medal of Arts.
- The author whose memories of her Oregon childhood were shared with millions through the likes of Ramona and Beezus Quimby and Henry Huggins.
- Cleary published more than 40 books, with more than 85 million copies. They were translated into 29 languages.
- Her books have been sold worldwide since her first book was published in 1950.
- Cleary was one of America's most successful authors.

OBITUARY

ISAMU AKASAKI



Date: 2nd April 2021

Japanese Nobel laureate Isamu Akasaki, inventor of blue LED Passed away.

Key Points:

- Japanese physicist Isamu Akasaki passed away. He was 92.
- He is a co-winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize in physics for inventing the world's first efficient blue light-emitting diodes.
- In 2014, he shared the Nobel Prize with Japanese physicist Hiroshi Amano, professor at the university, and Japanese-born American Shuji Nakamura, professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara.



ISSUES

NATIONAL

HEALTHCARE

DOUBLE MUTANT CORONAVIRUS VARIANT IN INDIA



Date: 2nd April 2021

Key Highlights:

- A unique “double mutant” coronavirus variant — with a combination of mutations not seen anywhere else in the world — has been found in India.
- However, it is still to be established if this has any role to play in increased infectivity or in making COVID-19 more severe.
- Genome sequencing of a section of virus samples by a consortium of 10 laboratories across India, (Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics – INSA-COG), revealed the presence of two mutations, E484Q and L452R together, in at least 200 virus samples.
- Mutations that eliminate the effect of vaccines or the immune system or lead to increased cases are bigger causes of concern.
- These two mutations have been individually identified in other variants of SARS-CoV-2 globally
- They are also associated with a reduction in vaccine efficacy.
- Their combined effect and biological implications have not yet been understood.

TRADE & COMMERCE

TRADE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN



Date: 2nd April 2021

Key Highlights:

- Pakistan will allow the import of cotton and sugar from India, partially reversing a two-year old decision to suspend all trade with India.
- The decision to cancel trade was taken by the Pakistan government in August, 2019, days after the Indian government amended Article 370 and reorganised Jammu and Kashmir.
- Pakistan's decision to suspend bilateral trade with India in August 2019 was a fallout of the constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir.
- However, an underlying reason for suspending trade was the 200% tariff imposed by India on Pakistani imports earlier that year after India revoked Pakistan's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in the aftermath of the Pulwama terrorist attack.
- Trade between the two countries suffered greatly.
- India's exports to Pakistan dropped nearly 60% to USD 816.62 million, and its imports fell 97% to USD 13.97 million in 2019-20.

INTERNATIONAL

HEALTHCARE

PAROSMIA



Date: 2nd April 2021

Key Highlights:

- Some people may experience parosmia as a symptom of COVID-19.
- Affected individuals experience “distortions of the sense of smell”.
- A person with parosmia can detect certain odours, but they might experience the smell of certain things as different and often unpleasant.
- For instance, to someone with parosmia, coffee may smell like burnt toast.
- Parosmia is a temporary condition and is not harmful.
- Some common triggers: Roasted, toasted or grilled foods, coffee, onions, chocolate, garlic and eggs.
- It is likely that parosmia manifests itself due to the damage caused to the olfactory neurons when “the delicate and complex structure in the nose is attacked by a virus.”

HEALTHCARE

INCREASE IN MATERNAL DEATHS AND STILLBIRTH DUE TO COVID-19



Date: 4th April 2021

Key Highlights:

- According to a study published in The Lancet Global Health journal, the failure of the health system to cope with COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in maternal deaths and stillbirths.
- Overall, there was a 28% increase in the odds of stillbirth. The risk of mothers dying during pregnancy or childbirth increased by about one-third.
- There was also a rise in maternal depression.
- COVID-19 impact on pregnancy outcomes was disproportionately high on poorer countries. The report is an analysis of 40 studies across 17 countries
- Inefficiency of the healthcare system instead of strict lockdown measures resulted in reduced access to care.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA)



Date: 5th April 2021

Key Highlights:

- USA and Iran would begin negotiations through intermediaries to try to get back into an accord limiting Iran's nuclear programme.
- The announcement marked the first major progress in efforts to return both countries to the 2015 accord, which bound Iran to restrictions on its nuclear programmes in return for relief from U.S. and international sanctions.
- USA's previous President Donald Trump had pulled the USA out of the accord in 2018 and imposed tougher sanctions on Iran.
- Iran responded by intensifying its enrichment of uranium and building of centrifuges, while maintaining its insistence that its nuclear development was for civilian and not military purposes.
- Iran's moves increased pressure on major world powers and raised tensions among U.S. allies and strategic partners in West Asia.
- Agreement on the start of indirect talks came after the EU helped broker a virtual meeting of officials from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and Iran, which have remained in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) accord.



IDEAS

NATIONAL

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IIT KANPUR DEVELOPED WATCH FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE



Date: 6th April 2021

Key Features:

- The research team from IIT Kanpur has developed a sensitive watch for the use of visually impaired people.
- The watch is developed by Prof. Siddhartha Panda and Vishwaraj Srivastava.
- It is a haptic watch with a tactile interface that helps visually impaired people to read the time easily.
- It has tactile hour indicators of different shapes which allow recognizing time easily.
- The user has to touch and scan the hour indicators of the watch and based on different vibration patterns, the watch will communicate time to the user.

DEFENCE

DRDO DEVELOPED ADVANCED CHAFF TECHNOLOGY



Date: 6th April 2021

Key Features:

- The Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has developed advanced chaff technology.
- The advanced chaff technology is developed to protect and safeguard India's naval ships against missile attacks from enemies.
- The DRDO's Jodhpur Laboratory has developed three variants of technology namely short-range chaff rocket, medium-range chaff rocket and long-range chaff rocket.
- All the variants fulfil the qualitative requirements of the Indian Navy as they conducted the trials for the same in the Arabian Sea.
- Chaff is a passive expendable electronic countermeasure technology that is used to protect naval ships from the enemy's radar and RF missile seekers. A small quantity of chaff material, when deployed in the air, acts as a decoy and deflects the enemy's missiles, which keeps the ships safe from enemy attacks.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

INTEGRATED HEALTH INFORMATION PLATFORM (IHIP)



Date: 6th April 2021

Key Features:

- The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan virtually launched the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP).
- The latest version of IHIP will serve as the data entry management platform for India's disease surveillance program.
- The IHIP will track 33 diseases while the earlier version used to track 18 diseases.
- The platform will allow automated data collection in a real-time manner. It will also aggregate and further analyse the data which will be used for policy making.
- The platform will also provide analysed reports on mobile or other electronic devices.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

BAIKAL-GVD: UNDERWATER NEUTRINO TELESCOPE



Date: 2nd April 2021

Key Features:

- Russian scientists launched one of the world's biggest underwater neutrino telescopes called the Baikal-GVD (Gigaton Volume Detector) in the waters of Lake Baikal.
- Mission: To study in detail the fundamental particles called neutrinos and to possibly determine their sources.
- It is one of the three largest neutrino detectors in the world along with the IceCube at the South Pole and ANTARES in the Mediterranean Sea.
- Lake Baikal is the world's deepest lake situated in Siberia.

ECONOMY

SPECIAL PURPOSE ACQUISITION COMPANIES (SPACS)

How Does a SPAC Work?



Date: 4th April 2021

Key Features:

- Earlier this month, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) issued an investor alert, which was the first warning of sorts for special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs).
- A SPAC, or a blank-check company, is an entity specifically set up with the objective of acquiring a firm in a particular sector.

- Aim: To raise money in an initial public offering (IPO), and at this point in time, it does not have any operations or revenues.
- Once the money is raised from the public, it is kept in an escrow account, which can be accessed while making the acquisition.
- If the acquisition is not made within two years of the IPO, the SPAC is delisted, and the money is returned to the investors.
- Certain market participants believe that, through a SPAC transaction, a private company can become a publicly-traded company with more certainty as to pricing and control over deal terms as compared to traditional IPOs.



disha

Nurturing Ambitions