

## Important Monthly Current Affairs – April 2020

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### Important Days

Date	Day	Theme/Others
April 2	World Austim Awareness Day	The Transition to Adulthood
April 2	International Children's Book Day	A Hunger for Words
April 4	International Day for Mine Awareness	Together for mine action
April 5	National Maritime Day	NA
April 5	International Day of Conscience	Change the World with Conscience
April 6	International Day of Sport for Development and Peace	NA
April 7	World Health Day	Support nurses and midwives
April 9	Play True Day	Play Safe on Play True Day 2020
April 10	World Homeopathy Day	Enhancing the scope of Homoeopathy in Public Health
April 11	National Safe Motherhood Day	NA
April 11	National Pet Day	NA
April 12	International Day of Human Space Flight	NA
April 14	Ambedhkar Jayanti/Bhim Jayanti	NA
April 14	World Chagas Disease Day	Silent and Silenced Disease
April 15	World Art Day	Leonardo Da Vinci's birthday
April 16	World Voice Day	Focus on Your Voice in 2020
April 17	World Haemophilia Day	Get+involved
April 18	International Day for Monuments and Sites/World Heritage Day	Shared Cultures, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility
April 19	World Liver Day	
April 20	UN Chinese Language Day	UN Department of Public Information in 2010
April 21	National Civil Service Day	NA
April 21	World Creativity and Innovation Day	NA
April 22	World Earth Day	Climate Action
April 23	World Book and Copyright Day	Organized by UNESCO
April 23	UN English Language Day	NA
April 24	National Panchayati Raj Day	NA
April 25	World Malaria Day	Zero Malaria Starts with Me
April 25	International Delegate's Day (1 <sup>st</sup> edition)	NA
April 25	World Veterinary Day	Environment Protection for Improving Animal and Human Health

April 26	World Intellectual Property Day	Innovate for a Green Future
April 28	World Day for Safety and Health at Work	Stop the pandemic: Safety and health at work can save lives
April 29	International Dance Day	Created by UNESCO
April 30	Ayushman Bharat Diwas	NA
April 30	International Jazz Day	Declared by UNESCO
(April 24-30)	World Immunization Week	Vaccines Work for All

## Important Banking News

### RBI

#### RBI cuts reverse repo rate from 4 per cent to 3.75 per cent

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor, Shaktikanta Das, stated that the apex bank has cut the reverse repo rate from **4 per cent to 3.75 per cent**. The repo rate remains unchanged.
- Das also stated that the **90-day NPA** norm will not to apply on to the moratorium granted on the existing loans by banks.
- He further stated that the LCR requirement of banks has been brought down to **80 per cent** from **100 per cent**. It will be restored in phases by April next year.
- The RBI Governor stated that the loans given by NBFCs to real estate companies will get similar benefit as given by the scheduled commercial banks.
- He also stated the new measures aim to maintain adequate liquidity in the system, facilitate bank credit flow and ease financial stress. he stated, "LTRO-2.0 will involve **Rs 50,000 crore** to begin with. Rs 50,000 crore special finance facility will be provided to financial institutions such as **NABARD, SIDBI and NHB**.

#### RBI raises WMA limit for H1FY21 to Rs1.20-lakh crore

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has upped the **Ways and Means Advances (WMA)** limit for the first half of the financial year 2020-21 (April 2020 to September 2020) to **Rs1.20-lakh crore** from **Rs 75,000 crore** in the year-ago period.
- This hike in limit comes in the wake of expectation that the central government will step up expenditure in the social sector, including health and sanitation, following outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The RBI stated it may float fresh market loans when the government utilises 75 per cent of the WMA limit.
- The central bank, in a statement, stated it retains the flexibility to revise the limit at any time, in consultation with the Government of India, taking into consideration the prevailing circumstances.
- The interest rate on the WMA is the repo rate, which is currently **4.40 per cent**. The interest rate on the overdraft is 2 per cent over the repo rate or 6.40 per cent.

#### RBI announces more measures to deal with economic fallout of Covid-19

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced more measures, including extension of period for realisation and repatriation of export proceeds, to deal with the economic fallout of Covid-19 pandemic.
- It also increased ways and means advances (WMA) limit by 30 per cent from existing limit for all states and union territories.

- In a statement, the RBI stated presently value of goods or software exports made by the exporters is required to be realised fully and repatriated to the country within a period of 9 months from the date of exports.
- In view of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the time period for realization and repatriation of export proceeds for exports made up to or on July 31, 2020, has been extended to 15 months from the date of export.

#### **RBI reduces trading timings of currency and debt markets**

- In view of the **COVID-19** outbreak, **the Reserve Bank of India** has notified a change in market timings. Beginning **April 7th**, markets dealing with government securities, call/notice/term money, corporate bonds, foreign currency, Indian Rupee Trades, commercial paper and Certificates of Deposit will be working **from 10 AM to 2 PM**.
- RBI has stated that lockdowns, social distancing, restrictions on movement of staff, work from home arrangements and business continuity plans is posing operational and logistic risks. It further stated that thinning out of activity is impacting market liquidity and increasing volatility of financial prices.
- RBI has stated that these revised timings will remain in effect till **17th April**. The apex bank has clarified that all regular banking services for customers, including RTGS, NEFT, e-kuber and other retail payments systems will continue to be available as per extant timings. It may also be noted that timing for equity markets has not be revised.

#### **RBI gives States longer overdraft period**

- The **Reserve Bank of India** has allowed a longer **overdraft period** for States and Union Territories (UTs) with immediate effect.
- This facility to tide over the cashflow mismatches will be available till September.
- States and Union Territories can now be in overdraft continuously for up to **21 working days** against the earlier limit of **14 working days**.
- Further, the number of days States and UTs can be in overdraft in a quarter has been increased to **50 working days** from the **current 36**.
- The central bank provides financial accommodation to States and UTs to tide over temporary mismatches in the cashflow of their receipts and payments by way of an overdraft under a facility called Ways and Means Advances (WMA).
- This is the Reserve Bank's latest move to deal with the pandemic. Earlier, it had increased the WMA limit by 30 per cent from the existing limit for all States and Union Territories, from April 1 to September 30.

#### **RBI urges bank customers to adopt digital payment modes, launches Twitter campaign**

- **Reserve Bank of India** urged bank customers to adopt **digital modes of payment** that are convenient and safe.
- The usage of digital modes to make transactions has become all the more important as the ongoing 21-day nationwide lockdown, imposed to maintain social distancing to contain the spread of the coronavirus, has restricted the movement of people.
- The RBI emphasised on transacting digitally as it gives the convenience of making payments anytime and anywhere.
- The **face of the campaign** is **Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan**.
- The RBI, through the campaign, reiterated the multiple digital payment options such as NEFT, IMPS, UPI and BBPS that are available 24\*7.

#### **Govt launches Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme 2020-21**

- **Government of India**, in consultation with the **Reserve Bank of India**, is going to launch new series of the **Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme**, which will open for subscription from **April 20**. The Sovereign Gold Bonds will be issued in **six tranches** from April 20 to 4 September, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Finance.

- The Bonds, to be issued by the RBI on behalf of the Government of India, will be sold through **Scheduled Commercial banks** (except Small Finance Banks and Payment Banks), Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices, and recognised stock exchanges such as BSE and NSE.
- Bonds will be tradable on stock exchanges within a **fortnight of the issuance** on a date as notified by the RBI.
- The minimum investment limit for Sovereign Gold Bond is 1 gram of gold, while the maximum limit of subscription is 4 kg for individual, 4 kg for HUF and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities, as notified by the government from time to time. The tenor of the Bond will be for a period of 8 years with exit option after completion of five years.

#### **RBI to inject Rs.25,000 cr via TLTRO on April 17**

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, stated it will conduct the fourth tranche of **targeted long-term repo operation (TLTRO)** of **three-year tenor** to inject **Rs.25,000 crore** liquidity into the banking system on April 17.
- The central bank stated funds availed under this tranche of targeted long-term repo operation will have to be deployed within **30 working days** from the date of the operation.
- So far, TLTROs aggregating **Rs.75,000 crore** have been conducted in three tranches
- The maximum amount that a particular bank can invest in the securities issued by a particular entity or group of entities out of the allotment received by it under the TLTRO is capped at **10 per cent**.
- Banks are required to acquire up to 50 per cent of their incremental holdings of eligible instruments from primary market issuances, and the remaining 50 per cent from the secondary market, including mutual funds and non-banking finance companies.

#### **RBI raises WMA limit to Rs.2-lakh crore in H1 FY21**

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, in consultation with the Government of India, has revised the limit for **Ways and Means Advances (WMA)** for the remaining part of the first half of FY21 (April 2020 to September 2020) to **Rs.2-lakh crore**.
- On March 31, the WMA limit for the first half of FY21 (April 2020 to September 2020) was upped to **Rs.1.20-lakh crore** against **Rs.75,000 crore** in the year-ago period. The hike in the limit comes in the wake of expectation that the Central government will step up expenditure on the social sector, including health and sanitation, following outbreak of the pandemic.
- The central bank provides financial accommodation to the government to tide over temporary mismatches in the cash flow of its receipts and payments as WMA.

#### **RBI announces calendar of MPC meetings for current financial year**

- **Reserve Bank of India** has announced the calendar of the meetings of the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** for the current financial year. The decision of the first meet will be announced on **June 5, 2020**.
- As per the schedule announced by the RBI, the next Monetary Policy Committee meeting will take place during **June 3 to 5**.
- The MPC decision is announced on the last day of the meeting. It stated that the other meetings will take place on August 4 to 6, 2020; September 29-30 and October 1, 2020; December 2 to 4, 2020; and February 3 to 5, 2021.
- The previous MPC meeting was advanced in view of the COVID-19 outbreak to March 24, 26 and 27 from originally scheduled for March 31, April 1 and 3.

#### **RBI eases investment norms under TLTRO 2.0**

- The Reserve Bank eased some regulatory norms for investments in the second round of **Targeted Long Term Repo Operation (TLTRO 2.0)** to provide relief to banks investing in papers issued by small and medium sized non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and microfinance institutions (MFIs) under the scheme.
- The central bank stated banks may deduct their investments in instruments issued by NBFCs from their Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) while calculating their priority sector commitment.
- Under the TLTRO 2.0 scheme, banks have to invest at least **50 per cent** of the total funds in bonds issued by small NBFCs of asset size of Rs 500 crore and below, mid-sized NBFCs of asset size between **Rs 500 crore** and Rs 5,000 crore and MFIs.
- Besides, the banks will get **30 days** to deploy money drawn under the TLTRO 2.0 in specified securities. This will be applicable for those lenders who have availed funds under the first tranche of TLTRO conducted on March 27, 2020.
- However, if a bank fails to deploy funds within the specified time frame, the interest rate on un-deployed funds will increase to prevailing policy repo rate plus 200 bps for the number of days such funds remain un-deployed. This incremental interest will have to be paid along with regular interest at the time of maturity.

#### **RBI Announces Special Open Market Operations Of Purchase And Sale of Government Securities Of Rs 10000 Crore**

- RBI has announced Special **Open Market Operations (OMO)** of Simultaneous Purchase and Sale of Government of India Securities.
- On a review of current and evolving liquidity and market conditions, the Reserve Bank has decided to conduct simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under Open Market Operations (OMO) for **Rs 10,000 crores** each on April 27, 2020.
- The central bank will purchase certain securities using the multiple price auction method with tenor between **six to ten years**.
- Simultaneously, it will sell securities using the multiple price auction method with tenor between **two to twelve months**.

#### **RBI announces Special Liquidity Facility for Mutual Funds of Rs 50,000 crore**

- The **Reserve Bank of India** announced a **Special Liquidity Facility for Mutual Funds (SLF-MF)** of 50,000 crore rupees with a view to easing liquidity pressures on MFs. The RBI has stated that it remains vigilant and will take whatever steps are necessary to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 and preserve financial stability.
- The Apex bank has stated that under the Special Liquidity Facility for Mutual Funds (SLF-MF), the RBI shall conduct repo operations of **90 days tenor** at the fixed repo rate. The SLF-MF is on-tap and open-ended and banks can submit their bids to avail funding on any day from Monday to Friday (excluding holidays).
- The Reserve Bank will review the timeline and amount, depending upon market conditions. The funds availed under the SLF-MF shall be used by banks exclusively for meeting the liquidity requirements of MFs by extending loans, and by undertaking outright purchase of land or repos against the collateral of investment grade corporate bonds, Commercial Papers (CPs), debentures and Certificates of Deposit (CDs) held by MFs.

#### **Policy Rates:**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Repo Rate	4.4%
Reverse Repo Rate	3.75%
Marginal Standing Facility Rate	4.65%

Bank Rate	4.65%
Cash Reserve Ratio	3%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio	18%

### SBI

#### SBI slashes MCLR by 35 bps; Savings Account interest rate cut to 2.75%

- **State Bank of India (SBI)** announced a reduction of **35 basis points (bps)**, or **0.35 per cent**, in its marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) across all tenors. This will make home and other retail loans cheaper i.e. the move will benefit the borrowers from SBI having MCLR-linked floating-rate loans.
- One bps is one-hundredth of a percentage point. This is the eleventh consecutive cut in MCLR in FY 2019-20. The bank stated in a release that the one-year MCLR has now come down to 7.40 per cent per annum from the earlier 7.75 per cent per annum with effect from April 10, 2020.
- In the same line, the bank has also revised the interest rates on saving bank deposits, keeping in view the liquidity in the system, which will be effective from **April 15, 2020**. The interest rates for balances up to **Rs 1 lakh** and above Rs 1 lakh will now accrue **at 2.75 per cent** as against the earlier 3 per cent.

### ADB

#### Global cost of Covid-19 could top \$4 trillion: Asian Development Bank

- The **coronavirus pandemic could** cost the global economy **\$4.1 trillion** as it ravages United States, Europe and other major economies, the Asian Development Bank warned.
- The estimated impact is equivalent to nearly five percent of worldwide output based on a range of scenarios, but the lender stated losses from "**the worst pandemic in a century**" could be higher.
- The Manila-based bank stated a shorter containment period could pare the losses to \$2 trillion.
- With billions of people in lockdown and economies at a standstill, the ADB stated Asia is forecast to grow 2.2 percent this year, its slowest pace since a 1.7 percent expansion during the Asian financial crisis in 1998.

#### India seeks \$6 billion loans from AIIB, ADB to combat COVID-19: Report

- India is seeking loans worth **\$6 billion** from multilateral institutions including the **Asian Development Bank** to combat COVID-19.
- The central government is in talks with **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** and **ADB** to secure these loans to further the testing and infrastructure facilities in the country.
- The World Bank approved a fast-track **\$1 billion** "India COVID Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project" to help India prevent, detect, and respond to the pandemic and better its public health preparedness. It was the largest ever healthcare sector support from the World Bank.

#### ADB assures \$2.2 billion support package to India

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masatsugu Asakawa** assured Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman of **USD 2.2 billion (about Rs 16,500 crore)** support to India in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Asakawa commended the Indian government's decisive response to the pandemic, including a national health emergency program, tax and other relief measures provided to businesses and a **\$23 billion** (Rs 1.7 lakh crore) economic relief package announced on March 26 to provide immediate income and consumption support to the poor, women, and workers affected by the three-week nationwide lockdown.

- ADB is also engaged with the private sector to meet its financing needs during period, ADB stated.

#### **ADB triples COVID-19 response package to \$20 billion**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) tripled the size of its response to novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to **20 billion dollars** and approved measures to streamline its operations for quicker and more flexible delivery of assistance.
- The package expands **ADB's 6.5 billion dollars** initial response announced on March 18, adding **13.5 billion dollars** in resources to help ADB's developing member countries counter the severe macroeconomic and health impacts caused by COVID-19.
- The 20 billion dollar package includes about 2.5 billion dollars in concessional and grant resources.
- ADB's most recent assessment released on April 3 estimates the global impact of the pandemic at between 2.3 and 4.8 per cent of gross domestic product. Regional growth is forecast to decline from 5.2 per cent last year to 2.2 per cent in 2020.

#### **ADB Ventures raises \$50 million, exceeding fund capitalisation target**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated that **ADB Ventures**, its new impact investment platform, will soon start operations after successfully raising the equivalent of **50 million dollars** from multilateral and bilateral development partners and exceeding its first fund close target.
- The first investors in the platform's inaugural fund are Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Clean Technology Fund, the Nordic Development Fund, and South Korea's Ministry of Economy and Finance.
- ADB Ventures was established in January 2020 to support and invest in **technology-driven businesses** with significant potential to scale and deliver impact while helping ADB's developing member countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **ADB sells \$4.5 billion five-year global benchmark bond**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) returned to the **US dollar bond market** with the pricing of a **4.5 billion dollars five-year global benchmark** bond issue proceeds of which will be part of ADB's ordinary capital resources.
- The five-year bond with a coupon rate of **0.625 per cent** per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of April 29, 2025, **was priced at 99.818 per cent** to yield 34.35 basis points over the 0.5 per cent US Treasury notes due March 2025.
- With around 130 investors taking part, the issue achieved wide primary market distribution with 35 per cent of the bonds placed in Asia, 34 per cent in Europe, Middle East and Africa, and 31 per cent in the Americas.
- By investor type, 56 per cent of the bonds went to central banks and official institutions, 26 per cent to banks and 18 per cent to fund managers and other types of investors.
- ADB plans to raise around **28 billion dollars** from the capital markets in 2020

#### **ADB approves \$1.5 billion loan for India to fight coronavirus pandemic**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated it has approved **\$1.5 billion loan** to India to help fund its fight against coronavirus pandemic.
- The loan has been sanctioned with a view to support immediate priorities such as disease containment and prevention, as well as social protection for the poor and economically vulnerable sections.
- It is fully committed to supporting the Indian government in its response to this unprecedented challenge, stated ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa.

- The quick-disbursing fund is part of a larger package of support that ADB will provide in close coordination with the government and other development partners.

#### **ADB gives \$ 346 mn loan for power sector in rural Maharashtra**

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** stated it has approved a **USD 346 million (around Rs 2,616 crore) loan** to Indian government to provide reliable power connection in rural areas of **Maharashtra**.
- Maharashtra is the second-most populous state in India, and about half of the state's labour force is engaged in agriculture and related activities in the rural areas, ADB stated.
- The loan will support the state government's **high voltage distribution system (HVDS)** program for new grid-connected rural agricultural customers across the state, stated the Manila-headquartered multi-lateral funding agency.
- The loan will be under ADB's results-based lending (RBL) modality, where fund disbursements are linked to the achievement of agreed programme results rather than to upfront expenditures, as is the case with traditional investment lending.
- This first ADB-financed RBL program in South Asia's energy sector will help in the early construction and installation of metered HVDS through the installation of about 46,800 kilometers of 11 kilovolt (kV) grid extension lines, construction and upgrading of 121 33/11 kV distribution substations.
- This loan will be accompanied by a USD 1 million technical assistance from ADB to demonstrate energy and water conservation efforts.

### **AIIB**

#### **Beijing-based AIIB mulls \$500 mn funding for healthcare system in India**

- The **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** is considering a proposal for financing **\$500-million project** in India to strengthen country's **national health care systems**. The scope of funding will also include the purchase of equipment and detection capacity as country battles COVID-19 pandemic.
- AIIB is doubling available funds under its COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Facility to provide upto **\$10 billion** due to high client demand. This follows AIIB's announcement to make \$ five billion available to help public and private sector clients manage through the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **World Bank**

#### **World Bank offers \$1bn for proposed India project**

- The **World Bank** has offered **\$1 billion** to the **Indian government** for a proposed India **Covid-19 emergency** response and health systems preparedness project. This four-year project aims to develop the preparedness of India's health care systems in the time of the pandemic.
- The project will measure progress on key indicators such as proportion of laboratory-confirmed cases of Covid-19 who responded within 48 hours and the proportion of specimens submitted for SARS-COV-2 laboratory testing confirmed within WHO stipulated standard time

#### **World Bank to roll out USD 160 billion emergency aid to help nations deal with Covid-19**

- The **World Bank** approved a plan to roll out **USD 160 billion** in emergency aid over 15 months to help countries deal with the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

- The board of the Washington-based development lender announced the first set of fast-track crisis funding, with an initial **\$1.9 billion** going to projects in 25 countries, and operations moving forward in another 40 nations, the bank stated in a statement.
- The bank also is working to redeploy **USD 1.7 billion** of existing funding, including the use of “**catastrophic drawdowns**,” a type of emergency credit line.
- India will be the largest beneficiary of the first wave of programs with a facility for **USD 1 billion**, followed by **Pakistan with USD 200 million** and Afghanistan with a little over USD 100 million, but funding is going to countries on nearly every continent.

#### **World Bank approves Rs 585 cr for Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project**

- **World Bank** has approved **82 million US dollars** (585 crore rupees) for the **Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project (HPSRTP)** for upgradation of major roads and modernization of the Public Works Department in the state.
- Under the project, Road construction work of **Barotiwala-Baddi-Sain-Ramshehar** with length of 45 kms, Dadol-Ladraur Road with length of 14.5 kms, Mandi- Riwalsar-Kalkhar of length 28 kms and Raghunathpura-Mandi-Harpura-Bharari road with length of 3.5 kms would be undertaken in tranche -one.
- The target of construction of 900 kilometres road length was fixed for the year 2019-20 but 800 kilometres roads could be constructed during the outbreak of coronavirus.
- On the other hand 1666 crore rupees had been allocated for target construction of 4960 kilometres of roads under **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)** for the year 2020-21.

#### **World Bank approves USD 400 million to enhance India's coastal resources**

- **World Bank** approved **USD 400 million** multi-year **financial support** to India. The international financial institution issued a press release stating that financial aid is being offered to improve livelihood opportunities for **coastal communities**.
- The first phase will cover **eight coastal States** -- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal, along with three coastal Union Territories -- Puducherry, Andaman, and Nicobar and Daman and Diu. These states and UTs will get **USD 180 million** in funding, for Enhancing Coastal and Ocean Resource Efficiency (ENCORE).
- The official release stated, The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved **USD 400 million multi-year financing envelope** to help India enhance its coastal resources, protect coastal populations from pollution, erosion, and sea-level rise, and improve livelihood opportunities for coastal communities.
- Moreover, the ENCORE will "help states prepare state-level Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans (ICZMPs); provide long-term support to India in meeting national coastal and marine spatial planning needs, and develop and protect more intangible 'blue' resources.."
- The USD 400 million loan from the international bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has a final maturity of 14.5 years including a grace period of five years.

### **Other Banking News**

#### **Small Savings Scheme, PPF Rates Slashed For April-June**

- Interest rate on **public provident fund (PPF) scheme** has been lowered to **7.1 per cent** for the upcoming June quarter of financial year 2020-21. This is the **lowest interest rate** offered on the popular small savings scheme **since 1977**. Till the March quarter of FY20, PPF accounts used to attract **7.9 per cent interest**.
- The new interest rates will remain in effect for the first quarter of financial year 2020-21, that is **from April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020**. Rates for small savings schemes are **revised quarterly**.
- Interest on **time deposits** has been slashed by 1-1.4 per cent across tenors.
- Time deposits for **1-3 years** will attract **5.5 per cent**, instead of earlier 6.9 per cent.
- For **5-year time deposits**, depositors will accrue **6.7 per cent** from next quarter, instead of 7.7 per cent. In case of **5-year recurring deposits**, interest rate has been lowered by 1.4 per cent to **5.8 per cent** from 7.2 per cent.
- **Senior Citizen Savings Scheme** will attract **7.4 per cent** interest instead of 8.6 per cent. Monthly Income Account will accrue 6.6 per cent interest, as opposed to 7.6 per cent earlier.
- Interest on **National Savings Certificate (NSC)** will be calculated at **6.8 per cent** from next quarter onwards, instead of 7.9 per cent.
- Meanwhile, interest rate on **Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP)** has been lowered to **6.9 per cent** from 7.6 per cent. The **maturity period** has also been **changed to 124 months from 113 months**.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme** will attract **7.6 per cent** instead of 8.4 per cent.

#### ICICI Bank launches banking facilities on WhatsApp

- **ICICI Bank** has rolled out banking facilities on **WhatsApp**.
- This will enable its retail customers to undertake a slew of banking requirements from their home at a time when they are advised to stay indoors in the wake of the nationwide lockdown to fight against coronavirus.
- Using the service on WhatsApp, retail customers can check their savings account balance, last three transactions, credit card limit, get details of pre-approved instant loan offers and block and unblock credit and debit cards in a secure manner with end-to-end encryption for all messages.
- Additionally, they can also get details of the nearest three ICICI Bank ATMs and branches in their vicinity. The customers can do all of these while they are on the social platform.
- Earlier, ICICI Bank had rolled out '**ICICI Stack**', a set of digital banking and APIs.

#### IBA instructs banks to deposit Rs500 each in PMJDY accounts of women for three months

- An amount of **Rs 500** each will be credited to the accounts of all women account holders under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** for the **next three months**.
- The **Indian Banks Association (IBA)** has written to member banks with respect to the direct cash transfer and logistics for withdrawal by the account holders, as part of Central assistance amid the pandemic.
- A meeting of the IBA Managing Committee decided to advise banks that, keeping in view the ongoing lockdown and the need for maintaining social distancing and sanitisation, they may take steps to ensure seamless withdrawal of the amount by individual beneficiaries from their respective accounts.
- The IBA also reiterated that the bank should be mindful of the guidelines issued by the DFS. They require that banks ensure adequate liquidity at branches and business correspondents; replenish ATMs on a regular basis to meet requirements; arrange for mobile ATMs wherever required with sufficient cash; and send SMS to beneficiaries regarding (i) the time schedule for withdrawal (ii) requesting them to utilise digital payment modes with a view to complying with prescribed Covid-19 safeguards.

#### Jana Small Finance Bank rolls out digital banking platform

- **Jana Small Finance Bank** has launched **DigiGen**, a digital banking platform where customers can digitally open a savings account and fixed deposit instantly; anytime, anywhere.
- **DigiGen** onboarding is a three-step process to open an account. True to its brand promise 'paise ki kadar', customers are eligible for 4.5 per cent interest rates on savings account with no minimum balance and up to 7.5 per cent interest on fixed deposits, stated a bank release.
- The new digital solution also offers a host of other features, including online bill payment, instant money transfer and airport lounge access on debit card, to name a few.

#### **Axis Bank offers EMI deferment on loans for 3 months**

- **Axis Bank** has offered its customers to opt for the **loan moratorium** if they face problem in keeping their EMIs running, in line with actions of its peers.
- Customers can opt for moratorium on payment of installments and interest for various term loans/credit card dues, and/or defer the interest for working capital facilities due between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020, it stated.
- The offer of flexibility is in line with most of its peers in the private sector such as HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank.
- Further, the bank clarified to its customers that it is only a deferment option and not a concession or waiver, since interest would continue to accrue for this period.
- The repayment would resume from June 2020, once the deferment period is over.

#### **Indian Bank launches new products to support farmers, poultry players**

- **The Indian Bank** has launched **three new products** to support **farmers, poultry players** and the workforce in the informal sector during the current crisis triggered by the outbreak of dreaded Covid-19 virus.
- Under the **IND Covid Emergency Agro-Processing Loan**, agro-processing units can avail 10 per cent of the working capital limit.
- Borrowers in the poultry sector (layer/breeder/broiler) can avail **20 per cent** of the working capital limit under the **IND Covid Emergency Poultry Loan scheme**.
- Similarly, under the **IND KCC Covid Sahaya Loan**, farmers cultivating crops and rearing animals and having Kisan Credit Card facility can avail 10 per cent of the limit as a soft loan, Indian Bank stated in a statement. The loans are repayable in easy instalments with six months moratorium period, it stated.
- Besides, under a special credit package "**SHG Covid Sahaya Loan**", women members of Self Help Groups can avail loan @Rs.5,000 each. Thus an SHG with 20 members can avail a loan up to Rs 1,00,000 as a soft loan repayable in easy instalments, the Bank stated.

#### **SBI Cards offers moratorium on credit card dues**

- The RBI's Covid-19 package, **SBI Cards and Payment Services** has given its cardholders the option to avail a moratorium on their credit card dues.
- The moratorium period is of three months, for making payment of credit card outstanding balance/EMIs which are due between March 1 and May 30- 2020, as well as the entire outstanding amount, including the applicable interest and charges (other than late payment charge) during this period, as per the cardholder's June 2020 payment due date.
- For EMI payments, there will be no extension of tenure. Any account which was in current status (non-delinquent with no overdues) as on February 29 would be eligible for the moratorium.

#### **Airtel Payments Bank partners with Bharti AXA General Insurance**

- **Airtel Payments Bank** has partnered with **Bharti AXA General Insurance** to offer simple and focused health insurance plans to provide financial protection against Covid-19.
- Under the partnership, the general insurer has rolled out two different health insurance plans — **Bharti AXA Group Health Assure**, which offers lumpsum benefit of Rs.25,000, and **Group Hospital Cash** providing daily benefit starting Rs.500 per day — to cover protection against the coronavirus.
- With no pre-medical check-up required, both the products are currently available for Savings bank account customers of Airtel Payments Bank who are not suffering from Covid-19 or its symptoms.
- The validity period of these policies is restricted to **one year** and they will be issued on individual name basis only.
- **Bharti AXA Group Health Assure Policy** covering Covid-19 comes with a fixed cover offering 100 per cent sum insured as a lumpsum, if the policy holder is diagnosed positive or gets quarantined in a Government Hospital or Military Facility/Establishment.
- In case, the policy holder is diagnosed negative after being quarantined for at least 14 days in a Government Hospital or Military Facility/Establishment, he or she will be entitled to 50 per cent of the sum insured.

#### **SIDBI to provide emergency working capital of up to Rs 1 crore to MSMEs**

- **The Small Industries Development Bank of India - SIDBI** has stated that it will provide emergency working capital of up to **one crore rupees** to **small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** against their confirmed government orders. The SIDBI Assistance to Facilitate Emergency response against **Corona virus - SAFE PLUS** will be offered collateral free and disbursed **within 48 hours**.
- SIDBI informed that the loans will be offered at an interest rate of five per cent. Meanwhile, the bank further informed that the limit of SAFE loans, announced a few days back has been enhanced from 50 lakh rupees to two crore rupees.
- The scheme was launched to provide financial assistance to MSMEs engaged in manufacturing of hand sanitizers, masks, gloves, head gear, bodysuits, shoe-covers, ventilators and goggles used in dealing with COVID-19.

#### **BoB launches four schemes for agri sector**

- **Bank of Baroda (BoB)** has announced schemes where it will offer additional loans of up to **Rs.1 lakh** to existing **self-help group (SHG)** borrowers and up to **Rs.50,000** to existing crop loan borrowers, among others.
- India's third-largest public sector bank, stated it will provide existing SHGs facilities in the form of cash credit/over draft/term loan/demand loan. The minimum and maximum loan amount is **Rs.30,000** and **Rs.1 lakh per SHG**, repayable in **24 months**.
- The repayment under this additional assurance to SHGs-Covid-19 scheme would be on a monthly / quarterly basis, and the moratorium will be for a period six months from the date of disbursement.
- To meet the temporary liquidity mismatches of FPO/FPC arising out of Covid-19, the bank stated a limit of 10 per cent of the combined limits will be sanctioned with maximum amount of Rs.5 lakh with the tenor of 36 months. The moratorium period is for a maximum of six months.
- Under the Baroda special scheme for existing agriculture investment credit borrowers, including dairy and fisheries, the bank will provide instant credit to meet their funds requirement for farm maintenance and other farm related activities.
- The limit in this case stands at 10 per cent of other agriculture sanction limit (minimum Rs.10,000) and maximum Rs.50,000 for existing regular investment credit agriculture accounts.

- Under the Baroda Special scheme for existing crop loan borrowers, the bank launched a scheme for instant credit to meet the requirement of agriculture and related domestic purpose. The limit for this scheme is 10 per cent of KCC sanction limit – minimum Rs.10,000 and maximum Rs.50,000 – for existing regular KCC holders.

#### **Bank of Maharashtra launches financial support schemes**

- **Bank of Maharashtra (BoM)** has announced various schemes for the corporate, retail, and agriculture sector to ensure immediate financial assistance against the backdrop of Covid-19 crisis.
- For corporates, BoM is providing '**Ad-hoc Line of Credit Covid-19**' by way of SLC (Stand by line of Credit) to overcome the liquidity impact of Covid-19. This facility can be availed in the form of working capital/STL. Borrowers having standard accounts can avail of this facility.
- The quantum of finance is maximum up to 10 per cent of the existing fund based working capital limit, maximum up to Rs.50 crore," the bank stated in a release. This credit will be in addition to the existing finance. The repayment for this scheme would be within a maximum period of 12 months and the moratorium will be for a period of six months.
- For existing housing loan borrowers, BoM is providing '**Emergency Credit Line- Personal Loan Scheme- Covid 19**' in the form of term loan for all standard housing loan accounts, where security charge is completed and repayment started.
- Under the '**Mahabank SHG Rahat Yojana- Covid 19**' scheme, the BoM will provide additional support to existing SHGs in the form of term loan. The quantum of loan is decided as **Rs.7,500** per SHG member and total maximum limit (including existing loan) is up to Rs.3lakh per SHG. This term loan is to be repaid within **36 months**. The repayment for this scheme would be on a monthly/quarterly/half-yearly basis as per borrower SHG's request and the moratorium will be for a period six months.
- Under the Covid-19 **Mahabank Kisan Rahat Yojana** for agro-based industries/units, the objective is to meet the temporary liquidity mismatch of agro and food processing industries arising from Covid-19 disruption.

#### **IDBI Bank board sets bond borrowing limit**

- **IDBI Bank's board** of directors approved rupee bond borrowing limit of **Rs.7,500 crore** for FY 2020-21.
- **The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India** promoted bank stated in a statement that the resources would be borrowed in one or more tranches of additional tier-1 bonds up to Rs.3,000 crore, Basel III tier-2 bonds up to Rs.3,500 crore and senior/infrastructure bonds up to Rs.1,000 crore by way of private placement during FY 2020-21.
- IDBI Bank shares closed at Rs.19.85 apiece, down 1 per cent over the previous close on BSE.

#### **ICICI Bank deploys mobile ATM vans in Delhi NCR and Chennai**

- **ICICI Bank** has started deploying **mobile ATM vans**. Initially, ICICI Bank has introduced mobile ATM vans in **NCR and Chennai** and soon it is going to introduce the mobile ATM van service in Mumbai, Noida and some districts in UP as well.
- This enables citizens to withdraw cash, conveniently and safely at their doorstep and without having to venture out far from their premises during the COVID-19 outbreak.

#### **IOB nominated for collection of PM Cares Fund**

- **Indian Overseas Bank (IOB)** has been nominated by the Centre for the collection of funds for the Coronavirus outbreak. The funds will be assigned to the **Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM Cares) Fund**.

- IOB stated the contributions can be made by RTGS, NEFT, IMPS, Cheques and Demand Drafts drawn in favour of “PM CARES FUND”. Contributions can also be sent directly by Electronic Clearing System (ECS) to the designated Savings Bank Account of PM Cares Fund to Indian Overseas Bank.
- All such contributions will be entitled to 100 per cent Income Tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act and donors can download a formal contribution receipt from the PM Cares portal after 15 to 20 days of the donation.

#### Flipkart, ICICI Lombard, Go Digit to offer COVID-19 focused health insurance

- **Flipkart** in partnership with **ICICI Lombard** and **Go Digit General Insurance**, has launched **health insurance policies** on its platform that distinctly cover COVID-19.
- Enabling health cover for consumers combating the global pandemic, the two health insurance policies come with instant claim benefits and do not require any medical tests at the time of purchase.
- According to industry estimates, about 56 per cent of the Indian population is not covered under any health insurance policy.
- The COVID-19 Protection Cover by ICICI Lombard provides an instant **Rs.25,000** benefit plan paid to the customer on positive diagnosis of COVID-19. It is priced at an annual premium of **Rs.159**.
- Additionally, the policy provides health assistance benefit, virtual and teleconsultation benefit, and ambulance assistance. It allows **Flipkart's customers** to submit digital copies of the claim document to the insurer for processing.
- **The Digit Illness Group Insurance** offered by Digit Insurance allows consumers to avail a hospitalisation cover up to a sum assured of **Rs.1 lakh** with an annual premium of **Rs.511**.
- Further, there is no limit on room rent or intensive care unit. The policy covers 30 days pre-hospitalisation and 60 days post-hospitalisation fee. Policyholders can also avail one per cent of the sum assured for ambulance services.

#### NABARD to give refinance to SFBs to provide short-term credit to farmers, small businesses

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** has decided to open its refinance tap for **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)** to augment their resources for providing short-term credit to farmers, small business units and micro enterprises.
- This move is significant as it comes at a time when those at the ground level are reeling under the impact of the 21-day nation-wide lockdown, which was imposed with effect from March 25 to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, and the sequential slowdown which started from the first quarter of FY19.
- The refinance support from NABARD is expected to further boost the ability of SFBs to lend to the so-called priority sector, which includes farmers, small business units and micro enterprises, and help them mitigate the effects of lockdown and slowdown.
- According to NABARD, the purposes for which it will provide refinance assistance to SFBs will be in respect of their short-term disbursements for various purposes, including short-term/ working capital loans for agriculture and allied sectors, non-farm sectors (including artisans, weavers, handicrafts, etc), marketing of agri produce, agri inputs, non-farm produce, and bonafide trade activities.
- For drawing refinance from NABARD, an SFB has to comply with the **minimum capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) of 15 per cent**; its net non-performing assets should not exceed **5 per cent of loans and advances** outstanding for the bank as a whole; and it should be in profit.

- Agriculture, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and other eligible short-term loans lent for a duration not exceeding 12 months, which are outstanding in the books of an SFB as on the date of drawal application, non-overdue and unencumbered, will be eligible for NABARD's refinance.
- Short-term loans disbursed are repayable within 12 months from the date of disbursement. The interest rates and risk premium on refinance will be decided by NABARD based on prevailing market rate, risk perception, etc.

#### **Finance Ministry relaxes norms for deposits in PPF, SSA and Post Office RD**

- The **Finance Ministry** has released norms for deposit in **Public Provident Fund (PPF) Sukanya Samridhi Account (SSA)** and **Recurring Deposits (RD)** of Post offices.
- PPF and SSA are key instruments for tax saving under the Income Tax Act. One can deposit upto **Rs.1.50 lakh** in all these tax saving instruments, and that amount is deducted from total income before the calculation of income tax.
- The Government has already stated that the money can be deposited in tax saving instruments for fiscal year 2019-20 till **June 30**.
- Accordingly, it has been decided that the subscribers of PPF and SSA may now deposit their savings up to June 30, which couldn't be deposited in FY 2019-20 due to lockdown in the country. Earlier the last date was March 31.
- This decision has been taken to safeguard interests of small savings depositors in view of the lockdown in the country due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry stated.
- It has also been stated that there will not be revival fee/penalty charges on n the PPF, SSA/RD accounts in which mandatory minimum deposit in not made upto March 31 subject to such deposit are made up to June 30.
- All those PPF subscribers, whose accounts were matured on March 31, 2020 (including one year window for extension), can now be extended up to June 30.

#### **Max Life Insurance, Yes Bank extend partnership by five years**

- **Max Life Insurance** and **Yes Bank** announced a five year extension to their strategic **bancassurance relationship**.
- Through this renewal of their bancassurance partnership both the companies have reaffirmed their commitment to invest in building a digitally-enabled ecosystem that will provide a seamless experience for customers in their financial planning and protection journey, the companies stated in statement.
- The two companies had started their partnership in February 2005, and have offered solutions to over 2.5 lakh customers.

#### **HDFC Chairman pushes for restructuring of NPA norms**

- **HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh** pushed for a one-time restructuring of **stressed real estate accounts** and relaxation in classification of **NPA norms to 180 days from 90 days** to help the sector.
- While addressing representatives from the real estate sector through video conferencing, Parekh stated unless the stressed accounts are restructured, financial institutions will find it difficult to provide additional liquidity to the sector.
- He stated recommendation has already been made to the RBI for the restructuring following which real estate developers can be given additional money.

#### **Tata AIA becomes the first Life Insurance company to announce Additional Benefits Related to COVID-19**

- As part of **Tata AIA Life's initiative**, its individual policyholders will get COVID-19 related additional benefit up to **Rs 500,000** at no additional cost.
- Further, to extend the Circle of Protection to its own Agents, all '**active**' **Agents of Tata AIA Life Insurance** along with their spouse and children will be reimbursed up to **Rs 25,000** in case of hospitalisation due to COVID-19.

- All employees and Agents are working completely on a digital platform from the comfort of their homes to ensure a full suite of services to consumers.
- All policyholders of Tata AIA will get an additional benefit equal to the base sum assured or Rs 500,000 whichever is lower for valid death claims due to COVID-19. This benefit is applicable for all valid death claims with a date of death on or before June 30 2020.

#### Equitas Small Finance Bank steps up digital banking services

- **Equitas Small Finance Bank Limited (the "Bank")**, the largest **small finance bank ("SFB")** in India in terms of number of banking outlets offers digital banking with **Selfe FDs** and **Selfe savings accounts** during the national/ regional lockdown with NO physical contact or branch visits; just selfonboarding by new customers.
- Customers can open **Selfe Fixed Deposit (FD)** online for value upto **Rs. 90,000/-** with the Bank by keeping their Aadhaar Number and PAN handy; and then booking their FD online in just three minutes; and enjoying returns upto 7.75%\* p.a. for 1 year.
- **Selfe FD**, a digital standalone **Insta Fixed Deposit**, envisages easy and effortless FD booking from the comfort of home, transactional convenience packaged by offering UPI VPA funding from any full-KYC non-Equitas bank account in India (linked in UPI).
- Selfe FDs are designed with certain additional features to the traditional products, which we believe will add value to the FD account and make the overall proposition attractive to the end customer.
- **SELFE Savings Account** is a digital bank account which can be opened with a web based interactive video form by registering using Aadhaar number, PAN and other basic details. Customers can set up a mobile banking PIN and start using their account immediately.
- They can get interest rate up to 7.5% p.a. with no minimum balance and virtual debit card. The Bank also supports its customers through their chat bot Aidy to take care of the customer needs and queries.

#### HDFC Bank launches Safety Grid campaign for social distancing

- **HDFC Bank** has launched a **campaign** to encourage and reinforce **social distancing** while waiting at shops.
- Using the outer grid of **HDFC Bank logo**, it has created physical markers on the ground to help people maintain the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** prescribed **social distance** while waiting in queue at a shop or an establishment.
- After a pilot in Kolkata, the Safety Grid campaign has been launched in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune, Chandigarh and Bhubaneswar. It will be implemented at over 4,000 essential services stores across the eight cities. Till now, it has been implemented at over 1,750 essential services stores.
- The Safety Grid will be painted in front of the space leading to various retail outlets such as pharmacies, grocery stores, and ATMs, among others.

#### ICICI Bank launches voice banking services on Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant

- **ICICI Bank** has launched **voice assistance-based banking services** for its customers and they can check balance, seek credit card details as well as ask other queries among others through this application.
- The bank has integrated its artificial intelligence (AI) powered multi-channel **chatbot iPal** with **Amazon Alexa** and **Google Assistant** through which its retail banking customers can undertake host of banking services through **voice commands**.
- This novel facility offers customers yet another way to connect with their bank from home at a time when they are advised to stay indoors in the wake of the nationwide lockdown.

- WhatsApp-based ICICI Stack offers nearly 500 services that covers almost all banking requirements including digital account opening, loan solutions, payment solutions, investments and care solutions. To get the benefit of the voice banking offering, customers need to download the Alexa/Google Assistant and link their ICICI Bank account through a secure two factor authentication process.

#### **Bajaj Allianz launches 'BAGIC GOQii Co-pay Option' under regulatory sandbox**

- **Bajaj Allianz General Insurance**, along with smart-tech enabled preventive healthcare platform **GOQii** has launched a new add-on health cover called '**BAGIC GOQii Co-pay Option**' under regulatory sandbox approval received from the IRDAI that would reward customers with a healthy lifestyle.
- The objective behind this product is to reward customers who are adopting a healthy lifestyle in the form of co-pay deduction in their health insurance policy.
- Once the policyholder agrees to opt for the add-on cover, GOQii will on-board the customer on their app to monitor their engagement level and also dispatch the health band. Policy will start with a co-pay of 50 per cent on completion of day 60, after which the insured can check his/her engagement level and co-pay level on the GOQii app itself, every 30 days.
- The option can be availed by individual policyholder with a policy tenure of one year with an insured sum of Rs.3 lakh, Rs.4 lakh or Rs.5 lakh.

#### **SIDBI launches special liquidity scheme for MSMEs**

- **Small Industries Development Bank of India** launched a **special liquidity scheme** for **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** through banks including **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**, Non-Banking Financial Companies including fintech NBFCs and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs).
- "The scheme would provide financial support to banks, NBFCs and MFIs by way of term loans to ensure operational continuity and promote onward lending to MSMEs," SIDBI stated in a statement, adding that the tenor of these loans will be 90 days.
- This follows the special **Rs.15,000-crore** liquidity window announced by the Reserve Bank of India to meet the credit needs of MSMEs.
- To be eligible under the scheme, a bank should have a sizeable outstanding loan portfolio to micro and small enterprises, micro credit and sound financials, SIDBI stated, adding that they should have been in operation for a minimum period of three years and should have earned profit for a at least two years out of the last three years.
- Small Finance Banks should have earned profit during the last two years out of the three years of operation.
- The eligible NBFCs should be registered with RBI as Investment and Credit Company (ICC) and should have been in business for at least three years. They should have a minimum net owned funds of Rs.20 crore and have a credit rating of a minimum of 'BBB-' or equivalent as on March 31, 2020.

#### **Bank of Baroda announces ex-gratia, health cover for business correspondents**

- **Bank of Baroda** stated it will provide an **ex-gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh** to the next of kin of **business correspondents (BCs)** in case of loss of life due to COVID-19. It will also provide health insurance cover of **Rs 60,000** to the BCs.
- The bank has taken steps for BCs' financial security, in terms of ex-gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh to the nominee in case of loss of life due to COVID-19, and health insurance facility of Rs 60,000 to each active BC, it stated in a statement.

- Bank of Baroda stated to ensure maintenance of hygiene and safety, it is also providing additional support in tranches to keep the BC points sanitised and clean through sanitisers, disinfectants, use of masks and other measures.
- In the first tranche, **Rs 2,000** was provided to each active and functional BC in the month of April 2020. In May, each functional BC will be provided **Rs 1,000** for hygiene maintenance, the bank stated.
- Further, the bank will pay an amount of **Rs 100** per working day towards transportation as an incentive to the BCs to encourage them to extend their services from 10 am to 5 pm till June 30, 2020 subject to minimum 40 transactions.

#### **Axis Bank, Max Financial Services sign JV pact for Max Life Insurance**

- **Axis Bank Limited** and **Max Financial Services Limited (MFS)** announced the signing of definitive agreements to become joint venture partners in **Max Life Insurance Company Limited (Max Life)**.
- Axis Bank will hold 30 per cent stake in Max Life post transaction closure.
- The development will result in a mutually beneficial and enduring relationship between Axis Bank and Max Life and bring the stability of a long term partnership to India's fourth largest private life insurance franchise, Axis Bank stated in a statement, adding that the joint venture arrangement will significantly improve Max Life's competitive position vis a vis its competitors, including the other large bank owned private life insurers.
- The Boards of Axis Bank, MFS and Max Life approved the transaction late on April 27.

#### **Indian Overseas Bank launches special scheme for self help groups**

- **Indian Overseas Bank (IOB)** stated it has introduced a **special borrowing programme for self help groups** to help them tide over the challenges inflicted by COVID-19.
- The maximum loan amount is **Rs 5,000 per member** of a **self help group (SHG)** with a cap of Rs 1 lakh for the group.
- The bank stated SHGs with a good track record and a history of minimum two loans from IOB will be eligible for this loan facility, which can be availed till June 30, 2020.
- As per the bank's rule, only those SHGs whose existing loans are standard and performing as on March 1, 2020 are eligible to avail loan under this special scheme.
- The state-owned lender stated interested borrowers can apply through branches directly or through business correspondents. IOB stated the loans would be sanctioned and disbursed within six working days.
- The loans are to be repaid in 30 EMIs after initial moratorium of six months, it stated, adding the rate of interest for these loans is 9.4 per cent.
- The bank stated it will not charge any processing fee or pre-payment fee for this loan scheme.
- Also these loans will have no correlation with the corpus of the SHG. Moreover, to encourage this segment of borrowers no additional security will be required from the group.

#### **BhartiAXA General ties up with PolicyBazaar**

- **Bharti AXA General Insurance**, a private insurer, has tied up with **PolicyBazaar.com** to offer '**Pay As You Drive**' **Motor Insurance policies** under a regulatory sandbox project.
- The usage-based motor insurance, popularly known as 'Pay As You Drive', allows customers to pay the premium depending on how many kilometres the car has travelled.
- Under this product, a customer pre-declares vehicle usage for a period of one year. Accordingly, the insurance premium will be calculated dynamically as per the pre-declared distance in km. The customer can choose from three slabs - 2,500 km., 5,000 km. and 7,500 km – as per his/her usage need.

- Bharti AXA General Insurance's proposal for a usage-based motor insurance product is among the several products approved by IRDAI in January this year under the Regulatory Sandbox project.
- As car usage is highly varied across users, the product benefits those who drive less.
- Own damage (OD) premium will be calculated post factoring the premium benefit as per the pre-declared slab. The issued policy will have all the coverage under standard motor OD cover for the tenure of one year.
- It is also useful for those who commute daily via public transport or frequently travel beyond city limits and rarely use their personal vehicle.

#### **NHB provides liquidity boost through Rs.10,000-cr special refinance facility**

- The government-owned **National Housing Bank (NHB)** has put together a **Rs.10,000-crorespecial refinance facility (SRF)** of up to **one-year tenor** for **housing finance companies (HFCs)** to partially mitigate their liquidity risk and improve liquidity in the overall housing finance system.
- Though primary lending institutions (PLIs) such as regional rural banks, small finance banks and scheduled commercial banks too are eligible for refinance under SRF, the eligibility criteria that have been prescribed suggest that it is meant exclusively for HFCs.
- One of the eligibility clauses for tapping SRF is that the ratio of individual housing loans to total assets should be a minimum of 51 per cent. Going by this, only HFCs will qualify. Currently, banks are flush with liquidity and may not require refinance.
- NHB has stipulated two other conditions for accessing the short-term SRF by HFCs and other eligible PLIs — their net non-performing assets cannot exceed 7.50 per cent; and they should have extended moratorium to their customers and this should have adversely impacted at least 15 per cent of their cash flows during the moratorium period (March 1 to May 31, 2020).

#### **KVGB loan scheme for Covid-19-affected MSME borrowers**

- **Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank (KVGB)**, a regional rural bank headquartered in **Dharwad**, has launched a loan scheme to provide some relief to borrowers whose business activities are disrupted on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Launching the loan scheme '**Vikas Abhaya**' in **Dharwad**, P Gopi Krishna, Chairman of KVGB, stated this loan scheme will be an additional credit facility to the eligible existing **micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME)** borrowers.
- This scheme will help them tide over the current crisis and ensure continuity of viable business activity.
- The loan will be for the existing **MSME customers** who have been regular as on February 29.
- A maximum loan of up to **Rs.1 lakh** will be provided and no collateral security will be insisted upon. The loan is repayable within 36 months.

#### **Revision Points**

<b>Name of the Organization</b>	<b>Headquarters</b>	<b>Head of the Organization</b>
Reserve Bank of India	Mumbai	Shaktikanta Das
Paytm	Noida	Vijay Shekhar Sharma (Founder)
National Housing Bank	New Delhi	Sriram Kalyanaraman
Max Life Insurance	New Delhi	Prashant Tripathy

NABARD	Mumbai	Harsh Kumar Bhanala
SBI Card	Guragon	Hardayal Prasad
Axis Bank	Mumbai	Rakesh Makhija
Securities and Exchange Board of India	Mumbai	Ajay Tyagi
Tata AIA Life Insurance	Mumbai	Rishi Srivastava
Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank	Dharwad	P Gopi Krishna
State Bank of India	Mumbai	Rajnish Kumar
Paytm Payments Bank	Noida	Satish Kumar Gupta
Equitas Small Finance Bank	Chennai	Nagarajan Srinivasan (Non-Executive Director)
Bajaj Allianz General Insurance	Pune	Tapan Singhel
ICICI Bank	Mumbai	Sandeep Bakshi
Andhra Bank	Hyderabad	J Packirisamy
Bharti Axa General Insurance	Mumbai	Vikas Seth
Indian Bank	Chennai	Padmaja Chunduru
Bank of Baroda	Vadodara	Hasmukh Adhia
Jana Small Finance Bank	Bengaluru	Ajay Kanwal
Airtel Payments Bank	New Delhi	Anubrata Biswas
Bank of Maharashtra	Pune	AS Rajeev
IDBI Bank	Mumbai	Rakesh Sharma
Indian Overseas Bank	Chennai	Karnam Sekar
ICICI Lombard	Mumbai	Bhargav Dasgupta
YES Bank	Mumbai	Prashant Kumar
Indian Banks Association	Mumbai	Sunil Mehta

### Important Financial & Economy Affairs

ORGANISATION	GDP RATE	
	2019 – 20 (FY20)	2020 – 21(FY21)
Asian Development Bank		4%
Fitch Ratings		0.8% 6.7% (FY 2021-22)

ICRA Ratings		2%
Goldman Sachs	5%(Without Pandemic)	1.6%
UN 'Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) 2020'		4.8% 5.1% (FY 2021-22)
DBS Group	4.5%	1.5%
World Bank		1.5-2.8% 5% (FY 2021-22)
State Bank of India (Ecowrap report)	4.1%	1.1%
CARE Ratings		1.1%
India Ratings & Research		1.9%
CRISIL		1.8%
Moody's	0.2% (CY 2020)	

#### India's fiscal deficit may shoot to 6.2 per cent of GDP in FY21: Fitch Solutions

- **India's fiscal deficit** in 2020-21 may shoot up to **6.2 per cent of the GDP** from **3.5 per cent government** estimate as a fallout of the Covid-19 economic stimulus package, Fitch Solutions stated.
- At Fitch Solutions, we are revising our forecast for India's FY2020/21 (April-March) central government fiscal deficit to widen to 6.2 per cent of GDP, from 3.8 per cent of GDP previously (estimated by Fitch Solutions),
- Stating that weak economic activity will likely see revenue collection contract in 2020-21, Fitch Solutions stated receipts may contract by 1 per cent from a growth of 11.8 per cent previously.

#### Asia may see zero per cent growth in 2020 due to coronavirus pandemic: IMF

- Asia is expected to witness **zero per cent growth** in 2020 due COVID-19 pandemic, its worst growth performance in almost 60 years, but still the world's largest and most populous continent is likely to fare better than other regions in terms of activity, **the International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has stated.
- The IMF in a blog titled '**COVID-19 Pandemic and the Asia-Pacific Region: Lowest Growth Since the 1960s**' further stated the impact of the coronavirus on the region will be "**severe and unprecedented**". "Growth in Asia is expected to stall at **zero per cent** in 2020.
- This is the worst growth performance in almost 60 years, including during the **Global Financial Crisis (4.7 per cent)** and the **Asian Financial Crisis (1.3 per cent)**," it stated. It further noted that "Asia still looks to fare better than other regions in terms of activity".
- The global economy is expected to contract in 2020 by 3 per cent -- the worst recession since the Great Depression, the IMF stated adding Asia's key trading partners are expected to contract sharply, including the United States by 6.0 per cent and Europe by 6.6 per cent.

#### APEC economy to reduce by 2.7 pc in 2020

- The **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region** is expected to post a **2.7 per cent economic decline** in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19.
- This will be the most significant fall since the near-zero growth rate logged in 2009 during the global financial crisis, according to the APEC Secretariat.

- Last year, the 21-member region recorded economic growth of 3.6 per cent.
- The region's unemployment rate is projected to rise to 5.4 per cent in 2020 from 3.8 per cent in 2019, or an additional 23.5 million workers being unemployed in 2020.
- An economic rebound is a forecast for 2021, with the anticipated growth of 6.3 per cent, higher than the projected global economic growth of 5.8 per cent.

### Important Business News

#### Tata Power JV commences commercial operations of 178 MW Shuakhevi HPP in Georgia

- A Joint Venture between **Tata Power, Norway's Clean Energy Invest (CEI), and International Financial Corporation (IFC)** has announced the start of commercial operation of the **178 MW Shuakhevi Hydro Power Project (Shuakhevi HPP)** located in southwest **Georgia**.
- AGL will be soon commissioning the **9 MW Skhaltta Hydro Power project** which is also a component of the overall **Shuakhevi Project scheme**.
- The project will generate around 450 GWh of clean energy to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases by more than 200,000 tonnes a year.

#### Affordable housing firm Aavas gets \$60m ADB loan

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has signed an agreement to lend up to **\$60 million** to **Aavas Financiers Ltd** to improve access to housing finance for lower-income borrowers, particularly women.
- According to **Sushil Kumar Agarwal**, Managing Director and CEO of Aavas, ADB funding will help the firm further deepen its presence in States that lag behind.
- Aavas will use the funds to provide housing finance to women in low-income communities either as primary borrowers or co-borrowers.
- India is experiencing a severe housing shortage estimated at 18.7 million units in urban areas and 43.7 million units in rural areas, mostly affecting low-income groups. They face several challenges in obtaining mortgages including a lack of documents to prove their incomes.

#### PhonePe launches coronavirus insurance policy, offers Rs 50,000 cover at Rs 156

- **PhonePe** announced the launch of an insurance policy for coronavirus hospitalization called '**Corona Care**' from **Bajaj Allianz General Insurance**, the policy is priced at **Rs 156** and offers an **insurance cover** of **Rs 50,000** for an individual **under 55 years** of age. The cover is applicable for any hospital which offers treatment for COVID-19.
- Moreover, the insurance policy also offers a cover on 30 days of pre-hospitalization expenses and post-care medical treatment costs.

#### Google donates USD 6.5 million to help fight coronavirus misinformation

- **Google** has announced **\$6.5 million** in funding to fact-checkers and non-profit Organisations fighting misinformation globally around novel coronavirus.
- The funding is being given as part of **Google News Initiative (GNI)** which is also providing an online resource hub, dedicated training and crisis simulations for reporters covering COVID-19 all over the globe.
- To help, we're supporting Data Leads in partnership with BOOM Live in India and Africa Check in Nigeria to leverage data from Question Hub. This will be complemented by an effort to train 1,000 journalists across India and Nigeria to spot health misinformation, stated Alexios Mantzarlis, Lead of News and Information Credibility at Google News Lab.

- The GNI's 'First Draft' is using its extensive CrossCheck network to help newsrooms respond quickly and address escalating content that is causing confusion and harm.

#### **Google Domino's Pizza joins hands with ITC Foods to make home delivery of essentials**

- **Dominos Pizza**, in partnership with **ITC Foods**, announced the launch of Dominos Essentials to deliver essential items at home in view of the lockdown imposed owing to the spread of coronavirus.
- The delivery infrastructure of Dominos would be leveraged to help customers order everyday grocery essentials, a joint statement stated.
- A combo pack of Aashirvaad Atta and spices including chilli, coriander and turmeric powder would be available on Dominos app, it stated.
- The service would be available for consumers first in Bengaluru and then in the cities of Noida, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad.
- Customers would then be able to select the combo pack and use digital payment mode to complete the order.

#### **Bione launches India's first COVID-19 home screening test kit**

- **Bione** has recently launched a rapid **COVID-19 at-home Screening test kit** and has established itself as the **first healthcare company in India** to achieve the feat. The easy-to-use kit displays accurate results within minutes, instrumental in the timely screening of the deadly virus.
- The at-home screening kit is available for sale on their platform bione in after approval from the requisite medical regulatory authorities.
- The Biotech company has devised the screening kit for coronavirus which can provide respite from the impending fear of the contagion. The simple point-of-care home screening kit renders quick results, without having to step out in the wake of lockdown.
- It will foster timely detection of the disease while acting as a preventive tool for others in proximity to the user, by isolating the carrier immediately. The kit is priced between INR 2000-3000/- depending upon the global supply, to increase its affordability for the masses.
- COVID-19 Screening test kit is an IgG & IgM based tool which takes 5-10 minutes to deliver the results. Upon receiving the kit, the user is required to clean their finger with an alcohol swab and use the lancet provided to finger-prick. The cartridge provided reads the results from the blood sample thus obtained, within 5-10 minutes.

#### **Uber partners NHA to provide dedicated transport service to COVID-19 healthcare workers**

- **Uber** has partnered with the **National Health Authority (NHA)** to provide transport service to frontline healthcare workers in the country, who are engaged in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.
- Uber will initially facilitate the provision of 150 cars free of cost to support medical facilities in New Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Kanpur, Lucknow, Prayagraj and Patna through its recently launched UberMedic service, according to a statement.
- All UberMedic cars supplied to NHA will be equipped with roof-to-floor plastic sheeting enclosing the driver's seat, thereby acting as a protective barrier between the rider and driver, it added.
- Additionally, each **UberMedic car** will be disinfected after every ride to ensure the highest possible safety and hygiene standards in line with government guidelines.

#### **Tata Power Solar bags NTPC contract for Rs.1,730 crore**

- **Tata Power Solar** will build the 300 MW CPSU-II for NTPC at an all-inclusive price of **Rs.1,730.16 crore**.

- The Commercial Operation Date (COD) for this grid-connected solar photovoltaic project is set for September 2021 (18 months). With this order, the order book of Tata Power Solar stands at approximately **Rs.8541 crore**, including external and internal orders.
- In September 2019, post reverse auction, Tata Power Solar had received a Letter of Award to develop a 105MWp **Floating Solar Project** worth approximately Rs.343 crores including three years O&M.
- This project is one of the most prominent floating solar projects in the country. This venture is executed on the reservoir of NTPC Kayamkulam District in Alappuzha, Kerala and is to be commissioned no later than 21 months.

#### **L&T bags larger order from Indian Army**

- The smart world and communication business of **L&T Construction** has bagged a large order from **the Indian Army** to establish a **unified network management system** to manage, support and operate the countrywide armed forces network **under the Network for Spectrum (NFS)**.
- L&T has pegged the deal to be in the range of **Rs.2,500-5,000 crore**. This network is a part of the armed forces' modernisation push.
- The project involves the creation of a Cloud based IT infrastructure on Infrastructure as a service (IAAS) model. The scope also includes Next Generation Operations System and Software (NGOSS) based Unified Network Management System, Eight Network Operations Centers (NOCs) consisting of National NOCs, Disaster Recovery NOCs, Regional NOCs, Security Operation Centers, Tier III Data Centres and Training Infrastructure.
- The project is to be implemented in 18 months followed by three years of warranty and seven years of annual maintenance during which L&T will provide Managed Maintenance Services including SLA monitoring, service impact analysis and root cause analysis for the countrywide Armed Force Next Generation Network.

#### **Likee launches dedicated Covid-19 dashboard with WHO-sourced data**

- A **short video platform - Likee** - has launched a dedicated dashboard '**Fight Corona**', providing the latest and authenticated data related to the pandemic.
- The data will be sourced from the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** along with the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- Likee, the short video platform by BIGO Technology Pte Ltd, has launched an H5 page, furnishing comprehensive data related to the novel coronavirus, such as the number of new cases, number of recovered patients and the death toll.
- One tab in the section furnishes state-wise data, giving details from across all states and Union Territories in India. Whereas another tab furnishes details with respect to different countries across the world.

#### **L&T wins 'large' contract from Indian Oil for capacity expansion at Barauni Refinery**

- **Larsen & Toubro** stated it has won a 'large' contract from the **Indian Oil Corporation** for conducting capacity expansion of **IOC's Barauni Refinery**, in **Bihar**.
- The project won by company arm L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering involves engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning for 9 million tonne per annum (MTPA) Atmospheric & Vacuum Distillation Unit.
- Though the company did not specify the exact amount of the contract, as per its specification it ranges between Rs 2,500 crore and Rs 5,000 crore.
- The EPCC contract is for setting up a new 9 MTPA Atmospheric & Vacuum Distillation Unit (AVU) and allied facilities (EPCC-1 Package) for Barauni Refinery Capacity Expansion Project at IOCL's Barauni Refinery, Bihar. The capacity

of Barauni Refinery is being augmented from current installed capacity of 6 MTPA to 9 MTPA, the company stated in a statement.

- L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering is already executing a similar EPCC Project of 9 MTPA project for HPCL Visakh Refinery as a part of Visakh Refinery Modernisation Project.

#### **Flipkart, Tata Consumer Products partner to provide essential commodities for consumers**

- **Flipkart** and **Tata Consumer Products** stated they are coming together amid COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent lockdown enabling Indian consumers access to essential food and beverage products.
- **Tata Consumer Products** distributors will list as marketplace sellers on the Flipkart platform. Consumers can use the Flipkart platform to buy different combo packs of essential products such as beverages (tea and coffee) and foods (spices, pulses and nutri mixes).
- The partnership leverages combined strengths of both companies to solve consumer needs for access to essential commodities as they stay indoors and practice social distancing.
- The tie-up is already operational in Bengaluru and both companies plan to expand these facilities in Mumbai and New Delhi in the coming week and tier two towns in the future.

#### **Apollo and Airtel launches self-assessment tool for Covid 19 risk**

- **Bharti Airtel** and **Apollo Hospitals Group** has launched an **artificial intelligence (AI)enabled tool** which will help people to check their coronavirus risk profile.
- Apollo 24/7, the digital business unit of The Apollo Hospitals Group in collaboration with Airtel has launched the tool to support India's battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The free digital self-assessment test available on **Airtel Thanks app** will enable its customers to check their **COVID-19 risk profile**. The test, which has been developed by **Apollo 24/7**, uses AI based technologies to allow users to assess their COVID-19 risk profile by answering a few simple questions.
- Based on the user responses, the digital tool generates a risk score and suggests next best action including online consults on Apollo 24/7 free, dialling COVID non-prescriptive helpline from the app itself, self-care tips, social distancing guidelines and other important prevention steps as suggested by **WHO and MOHFW**.
- In addition, Airtel customers will now be available to recharge their Airtel connections at over 3000 Apollo pharmacy stores across India. This offers added convenience to Airtel customers looking at offline recharge options.
- The partnership aims to bring together **Airtel's pan-India** network reach and Apollo Hospital's industry-leading digital healthcare platform – Apollo 24/7 to raise awareness and break the chain of spread of COVID-19.

#### **India, China will register positive growth rate despite Coronavirus pandemic: IMF**

- **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has stated **India** and **China** are the only two major countries, which will register a positive growth rate despite Coronavirus pandemic. In its latest edition of World Economy report, IMF has projected India's GDP growth to be **1.9 per cent** in 2020 from **5.8 per cent** in January. For China, it has projected a growth rate of **1.2 per cent**.
- IMF stated, despite global economy hitting the worst recession since the Great Depression of 1930s, India and China are likely to bounce back strongly in 2021 with India expected to grow at **7.4 per cent** and **China** at **9.2 per cent**.
- IMF report stated most countries, in the advanced economy group, are forecast to contract this year, including the US, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

#### **Google launches 'journalism relief fund,' following Facebook**

- **Google** stated it will launch an **emergency fund** to help local news outlets struggling to maintain operations in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.
- The internet giant gave no specific figure for its fund, but stated it would offer grants ranging from the "**low thousands of dollars**" for the smallest operations to "**low tens of thousands for larger newsrooms.**"
- The move comes with the media sector facing deep cutbacks resulting from the global consumer lockdown, an intense economic slump and a retrenchment in advertising revenues that many news outlets depend on.

#### **FICCI Calls For Interest-Free, Collateral-Free Loans To Support Msmes Amid COVID-19 Lockdown**

- The **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)** has called for interest-free and collateral-free loans to support **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** which form a vital component of India's economy and are suffering due to the COVID-19 lockdown.
- An alternate mechanism should be worked out for MSME companies which are within the Goods and Services Tax (GST) network and having a turnover of less than **Rs 500 crore** for a period of up to **12 months** to enable them to cover fixed costs, salaries and other operational expenses, stated the industry body. For non-GST paying companies, an alternate mechanism may be worked out based on income tax filing.
- These loans can be given with pre-conditions that businesses will continue to run and there will be no layoffs of workers. After one year, the loans will be converted into a grant if all conditions are met. Threshold tax collection could be one metric, stated FICCI.

#### **TCS to power Israel's first fully digital bank**

- **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** will launch **Israel's first fully digital bank** in what is being seen as a transformative initiative that can impact the business model of other sectors as well.
- TCS was selected by Israel's Ministry of Finance to transform its banking sector by building a banking service bureau that would serve as a shared, plug-and-play, digital banking operations platform — powered by the **TCS BaNCSGlobal Banking Platform** — to help startup banks launch their operations very quickly, the company stated in a press release.
- The yet-to-be-named digital bank is the first to receive a banking license in Israel in over 40 years and is to be launched in 2021. The fully digital bank will have no physical branches and will provide Israeli citizens with all the services that regular brick and mortar banks offer, including credit, deposits, loans, account management, securities trading and processing.
- The new bank will also have access to all of Bank of Israel's liquidity tools and various payment systems.

#### **Vodafone Idea ties up with Paytm to launch 'Recharge Saathi'**

- **Vodafone Idea and Paytm**, a digital payments and financial services platform, have launched '**Recharge Saathi**' programme which helps individuals and small businesses to earn an additional income.
- The programme will enable any **Paytm customers** (following a registration) to start selling **Vodafone and Idea recharges on Paytm app**, the company stated in a statement.
- They can start selling mobile recharges by downloading and registering on the Paytm app. Vodafone Idea will also give an assured cashback to merchant partners for multiple recharges.
- Individuals and small businesses — such as pharmacists, milk booth operators, newspaper vendors and individuals — would be able to earn up to Rs.5,000 every month under the programme.

#### **DROR partners with MobiKwik to launch first-ever 'Social Distancing Contest'**

- **DROR**, India's personal safety app that keeps track of '**social distancing score**'. It has launched a first of its kind '**Social Distancing Contest**', in association with **MobiKwik**.
- The company stated that the upcoming contest aims at spreading awareness on the importance of social distancing to contain the spread of Covid-19 in India.
- Through the created platform, users will now be able to share their social distancing score and drive forward the message through this thought-led community-driven initiative that is playing a vital role in flattening the curve, DROR mentioned.

#### **Airtel signs \$1 billion deal with Nokia to improve 4G network experience**

- **Bharti Airtel** has signed a multi-year deal with **Nokia** to deploy the Finnish company's network solutions across nine circles in India. The deal could be worth **\$1 billion**.
- Nokia's SRAN solution helps operators manage their 2G, 3G and 4G networks from one platform reducing network complexity, increasing cost efficiencies and future-proofing investment.
- The Finnish company will be the sole provider of SRAN in the nine circles in the country.
- The Nokia supplied networks with low latency and faster speeds will provide Airtel the best possible platform for when **5G networks** launch across the country.
- Nokia stated the deal includes Nokia's Single Radio Access Network solution, AirScale Radio Access, Baseband, and related Services.
- The rollout, which will also lay the foundation for providing 5G connectivity in the future, will see approximately 300,000 radio units deployed across several spectrum bands, including 900 Mhz, 1800 Mhz, 2100 Mhz and 2300 Mhz, and is expected to be completed by 2022.

#### **Amazon India launches special fund to help its SMB partners in logistics**

- **Amazon India** stated it has introduced a **partner support fund** to help the **small and medium businesses (SMBs)** who are heavily reliant on the company.
- The company noted in a statement that SMBs across India have been financially impacted due to the nationwide lockdown.
- This fund for SMBs in logistics will be available to delivery service partners and select transportation partners in India to help adjust their business model to the "new realities" posed during the lockdown, it stated.
- Through the one-time disbursement, the fund will support the partners in multiple ways. This includes enabling them to provide financial aid to close to 40,000 of their staff for the month of April 2020.
- Additionally it will help cover some critical fixed infrastructure costs, and support liquidity and cash flow for these businesses as they resume and scale their operations post lockdown.

### **Important State Wise National News**

#### List of Festivals

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Organized by/Inaugurated By/Others</b>
Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) (Spring Harvest Festival)	Punjab	Sikh New Year

Vishu	Kerala	Malayalam New Year
Pahela Baishakh or Bangla Noboborsho	West Bengal	Bengali New Year
Puthanu/Puthuvarusham	Tamil Nadu	Tamil New Year

### Andhra Pradesh

#### 25 lakh poor in A.P. to get house sites on April 14 under Navaratnalu-Pedalanderiki Illu programme

- The government has issued modified guidelines for the distribution of **25 lakh house sites** to the poor in urban and rural areas under **Navaratnalu - Pedalanderiki Illu (houses for all the poor)** programme.
- It is in the process of tying up with HUDCO and other organisations for securing loans apart from getting necessary approvals under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).
- The house sites will be allotted at a concessional rate of **Rs 1** to the beneficiaries with **white ration cards**. A **sum of Rs 20** (Rs10 towards the cost of stamp paper, and Rs10 for lamination charges) will be collected from them.
- Sale of vacant house sites is prohibited but the beneficiaries after construction of houses and occupying them for minimum five years can transfer in case of any necessity subject to conditions imposed by banks and financial institutions which extended credit for constructing the houses.

#### AP govt to buy MOM developed by NAVY for COVID-19 patients

- **The Andhra Pradesh government** has come forward to purchase the portable **Multi-feed Oxygen Manifold (MOM)**, a novel contraption developed by naval personnel in **Visakhapatnam**, that would help meet any emergency requirement of oxygen supply to coronavirus patients
- Initially, the Navy was offering a few MOMs to AP free- of-cost.
- The Naval Dockyard Visakhapatnam (NDV) designed the innovative 'Portable Multi-feed Oxygen Manifold' (MOM) using a 6-way radial header fitted to a single cylinder.
- Using this unique device, one cylinder could be used to supply oxygen to six patients simultaneously, enabling critical care management to a larger number of Covid-19 patients with the existing limited resources.
- The preliminary trials of the entire MOM assembly were conducted at MI Room at Naval Dockyard Visakhapatnam, followed by rapid trials at the **Naval Hospital INHS Kalyani**, where it was successfully set up within 30 minutes.
- After successful trials, NDV commenced manufacture of 10 portable MOM with two 6-way radial headers that could cater to 120 patients at makeshift locations.

#### AP govt launches fee reimbursement scheme for students

- **Andhra Pradesh** Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched **Jagananna Vidya Deevana** which provides **full fees reimbursement** to about 14 lakh college students, including those in professional courses, across the State.
- The Government released **Rs.4,000 crore** along with the pending due of Rs.1,880 crore during the previous TDP government. The amount has been directly credited into the accounts of the students' mothers.
- The scheme is aimed at extending financial assistance to nearly 14 lakh students across the State, particularly those from lower-income households.
- Another scheme, **Jagananna Vasathi Deevana**, will take care of **hostel and mess charges**.
- Under **Jagananna Vidya Deevana**, money will be **directly credited** into the accounts in **four installments every year**. In case, if the parents have paid the college fees for the 2019-20 academic year, the government asked the parents to approach the college management and claim refund.

- Apart from those who took fresh admissions in the year 2019-20, those who were in professional courses are also eligible for this scheme.
- Amount to be disbursed under the scheme will as under
- **ITI Students: Rs.10,000**
- **Polytechnic students: Rs.15,000**
- **Degree students: Rs.20,000**

### **Arunachal Pradesh**

#### **New pit viper in Arunachal Pradesh named after Harry Potter character**

- The new species, **Trimeresurus salazar** is the fifth variety of reptile to have been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh in a little more than a year.
- A group of researchers who recorded this serpent has named it **Salazar's pit viper**. The name was inspired by **Salazar Slytherin**, the co-founder of J.K. Rowlings' fictional Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.
- Pit vipers are venomous snakes distinguished by their heat-sensing pit organs between the eye and the nostril.
- The discovery by **Zeeshan A. Ayaz Mirza** of Bengaluru's National Centre for Biological Sciences, Harshal S. Bhosale of Bombay Natural History Society and four others was published in the Zoosystematics and Evolution.

### **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**

#### **A 24X7 Health Channel dedicated to COVID-19 introduced for localities in Nicobar district**

- A **24X7 Health Channel** dedicated to COVID-19 has been introduced for localities in **Nicobar** district. The channel is available in 3 languages **Hindi, English** and **Nicobari**.
- The channel provides information covering the basic preventive measures like cleanliness and sanitation, maintaining social distancing and health advisory by doctors.
- In addition to this yoga, meditation and Ayush aid are being displayed to enhance body's immunity and hence engaging people through positive a narrative while staying at home.

### **Assam**

#### **Assam govt launches Dhanwantari scheme for home delivery of medicines**

- **Assam government** has launched a new scheme **Dhanwantari** under which locally unavailable medicines are provided to the patients at home.
- The people who want to get scarce medicines through this scheme will have to **telephone 104** and name the medicines. They can also send their **prescriptions through WhatsApp**.
- ASHA workers and multi-purpose workers will collect the medicines and deliver them to the patients' families.
- If the cost of the medicines is **Rs 200 or below**, the medicines will be delivered **free of cost**.
- If the cost of the medicines is **over Rs 200**, the patients' families will have to **foot the bill**.
- The delivery of medicines may take **eight hours to seven days**. If a medicine isn't available in a particular locality, we may collect and deliver it within around eight hours. If it isn't available in the pharmacies in a district, it may take one or two days for us to deliver. If medicines have to be brought from outside Assam, it may take around seven days to deliver.

#### **Assam government announces Rs 50 lakh insurance cover for journalists**

- The Assam **government** announced **life insurance cover of Rs 50 lakhs** each for all **journalists** in the state who are reporting during the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak.
- Chief Minister **Sarbanda Sonowal** made the announcement and stated journalists are covering the outbreak by braving infection.
- The Assam Chief Minister also stated that in the battle against Covid-19, journalists are working with the state departments to create awareness.
- While wishing journalists good health, Sonowal urged them to continue to report on the outbreak in the days to come for the good of the society.

## Delhi

### Delhi govt to provide financial assistance worth Rs 5,000 each to all auto-rickshaw, taxi drivers amid lockdown situations

- **Delhi government** will provide financial assistance worth **5,000 rupees** each to all auto-rickshaw, Gramin-sewa, E-rickshaw and taxi drivers in wake of difficulties faced by them amid lockdown situations. The amount will be transferred into their bank account.
- Mr Kejriwal stated, the process may take 7-10 days as government do not have bank account numbers of all the drivers. He stated, proper planning for this is being done.

### Delhi government launches WhatsApp helpline number to provide credible information

- In order to ensure that the citizens of **Delhi** have easy access to **credible information** around Covid-19, the Health & Family Welfare Department of Government of Delhi has launched a dedicated **WhatsApp helpline number**.
- This service is free-to-use and will act as a central source for accurate, trustworthy and up-to-date information on the ongoing pandemic, as per WhatsApp's official release.
- The coronavirus Helpline is an automated '**chatbot**' **service**, which will allow citizens to get verified answers to questions about coronavirus within 24 hours.
- The service will provide information on topics such as coronavirus prevention and symptoms along with tips on containment, other service helpline numbers, applying for e-passes and general information on measures that the state is taking to tackle this crisis.
- To use the free Delhi government corona helpline on WhatsApp, users have to save the number **+91 88000 07722** on their phones and then text the word 'Hi' via a **WhatsApp message** to get started. This service has been built on the WhatsApp Business API, using Infobip India and will be available in English.

### Delhi lab launches India's 1st drive-through coronavirus test centre

- **Dr Dang Labs** launched a testing drive through a **COVID-19 testing Centre** on the western side of the national capital's Punjabi Bagh area.
- The testing Centre can conduct about 35-40 tests in a day. This Centre ensures maximum safety and minimum exposure to both the patients and the sample collectors, stated Dr Arjun Dang, CEO, Dr Dang Labs.
- The whole process completes in less than half an hour and the reports thereafter are available online.

### Arvind Kejriwal announces 5-T plan to combat coronavirus spread in Delhi

- **Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal** announced a **5T plan** to stop the spread of the novel **coronavirus**. The 5T plan includes testing, tracing, treatment, teamwork and tracking.

- **Testing**

Aggressive testing is the key to curb the spread of the new coronavirus. The government will conduct one lakh rapid tests in hotspot areas like Dilshad Garden and Nizamuddin.

- **Tracing**

After testing, next comes tracing. People are identified who have come in contact with a positive patient and are asked to self-quarantine. The help of Delhi Police is being taken to ensure that self-quarantine is being followed.

- **Treatment**

2,950 beds are reserved for coronavirus patients. LNJP, GB Pant and Rajiv Gandhi hospitals will treat only coronavirus patients. Beds in private hospitals have been identified where only coronavirus patients will be treated. 12,000 hotel rooms will be taken over. Serious patients and elderly will be kept in hospitals and those with milder symptoms will be kept in hotels and dharamshalas.

- **Teamwork**

New coronavirus can only be defeated through teamwork and all states along with Centre are working together to stop the spread of the virus. Doctors and nurses are key members of the teams. Their protection is paramount.

- **Tracking & Monitoring**

The Delhi government will actively track the developments and action taken to stop the spread of the Covid-19.

#### **Delhi government launches operation 'SHIELD' in identified hotspots**

- Delhi government announced the sealing of 20 Covid-19 hotspots in the national capital, Chief Minister **Arvind Kejriwal** stated that his government will carry out **operation 'SHIELD'** in these localities.
- Expansion of SHIELD is S (Sealing of area), H (Home quarantine), I (Isolation of infected patients), E (Essential services ensured), L (Local sanitisation), and D (Door to door survey).
- Containment of 20 localities has started in Delhi to protect citizens from Covid-19 and provision of essential items is being made for people living in these areas.
- On making facial masks compulsory for anyone stepping out of the house, Kejriwal stated, if everyone starts wearing a mask then situation can be controlled. Taking a lesson from other countries, Delhi government has also decided to make wearing of masks compulsory for everyone.

### **Himachal Pradesh**

#### **Himachal Pradesh to provide free online medical consultation to sick people through e-sanjeevani-opd**

- Himachal **Pradesh Health Department** has come up with a unique idea of providing **free online medical consultation** to sick people at their residence through **e-sanjeevani-opd**.
- This free online health service has been started throughout the state and now people can consult to take health advice from the doctors of different medical colleges from **9:30 AM to 4:00 PM** on all working days.
- Under '**esanjeevaniopd**', 16 doctors of various medical colleges of state will provide free health care advice on all working days from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM. To take advantage of this facility one should have a computer, laptop, tablet with webcam mike, speaker and internet connection.
- To avail, free medical consultation one has to log in to '**esanjeevaniopd.in**'. Soon this facility will also be made available on mobile phones in state.

## Karnataka

### Karnataka CM to inaugurate mobile testing Kiosk for COVID 19 in Bengaluru

- **Karnataka** Chief Minister **B S Yediyurappa** will inaugurate a **mobile testing Kiosk** for COVID19 in **Bengaluru**. The mobile kiosk developed by **Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences** can be deployed in Corona Virus hotspots and clusters to procure the throat swabs according to the guidelines issued by **ICMR**.
- A project that uses technology to combat the virus was inaugurated by the state Deputy Chief Minister **C N Ashwathnarayan**.
- This clinic developed by Pulmonologist **Dr. Chandrashekar** enables the Specialist to converse with the doctor of far flung hospitals in district through video conference, check the medical records online, hear the pulse and heart beat of the patient and suggest remedies.

## Kerala

### Kerala installs Walk in Sample Kiosks for Covid-19 testing in Ernakulam district

- **Kerala** has installed **Walk in Sample Kiosks (WISK)** for mass collection of samples for **Covid-19 testing in Ernakulam district** based on South Korean model.
- A Walk-in Sample Kiosk or WISK is a mobile cubicle with a sealed glass front, and have extended gloves attached in the front, through which a medical practitioner standing in the cubicle can collect samples. The healthcare professionals in the kiosk can collect throat swabs of people who will stand outside the kiosk.
- The swab can be collected without direct exposure and contact. After the swab collection, the gloves can be sanitized from outside. This drastically reduces the need for PPE kits and protects the medical practitioner and the patient and enables mass collection of samples.
- The Walk-in Sample Kiosks, are being developed by Doctors of **Kalamassery Medical College**. Presently two kiosks are being installed at **Ernakulam Medical College** and will be placed in other hospitals too which isolation wards and testing facility.
- According to the **Ernakulam district administration**, the model installed in **Kochi** is one of the first of its kind in India. Meanwhile presently 266 patients are under treatment for Covid-19 in Kerala. and over 1, 52000 people are under observation in the State.

### Kerala's Pathanamthitta launches Tiranga vehicle for rapid screening of symptoms

- The vehicle, called **Tiranga – Total India Remote Analysis Nirogya Abhiyaan** – is painted amid the tricolour on the vehicle so that people would immediately recognise it as an initiative of the government and leave the health workers alone.
- This is the newly-launched Tiranga initiative, by the **Pathanamthitta district administration**, to make it easier to screen people for COVID-19, without the risk of exposure.
- Inside the vehicle is a medical volunteer, a non-medical volunteer and a driver.
- Screening will be done in containment zones and buffer zones and in the camps for migrant workers and destitute people.

- The vehicle is equipped with thermal scanning— an infrared thermometer mounted on the bonnet, a two-way microphone system by which people inside and outside the vehicle can talk to each other, a mobile camera that will click photos of their identity cards and so on.
- These vehicles are called RSV – 1 (Rapid Screening Vehicle - 1), which will be primarily used for screening people. The idea is that for every four RSV-1 vehicles, there will be an RSV-2. This second vehicle will be used for collecting samples, once we get the required approval.

### Goa

#### Goa to be the first state to integrate allopathy with Ayurveda to treat COVID-19 patients

- **Chief Minister of Goa Pramod Sawant** declared that Goa would be the first state to treat COVID-19 positive patients with **allopathy** and **Ayurveda** to boost their immunity, as per media reports.
- The CM informed that the state government is planning to integrate allopathy and Ayurveda and stated. **Goa** will be the first state to use both these streams of medicine.
- He added that although Ayurveda cannot cure COVID-19, it will certainly boost patients' immunity.
- The treatment will be administered in consultation with doctors who are dealing with COVID-19 patients

### Gujarat

#### Gujarat govt announces financial assistance of Rs 25 per day for each animal for April for all registered Gau Shalas

- **Gujarat government** has announced financial assistance of **Rs 25 per day** for each animal for the month of April for all registered **Gau Shalas** in the state.
- **Chief Minister Vijay Rupani** announced this to save the animal live stocks and taking care of financial crunches being faced by the administrators of registered Gau Shalas during the nationwide lockdown situation.
- The decision will put additional burden of approximately Rs 35 crore on state exchequer.

#### Ahmedabad railway station gets sanitizing tunnel

- **Ahmedabad station of Western Railway** has got the unique distinction of becoming the first station on Indian Railways to install a **Walk Through Mass Sanitizing Tunnel**.
- The walk through mass Sanitizer Tunnel has been set up by Ahmedabad division to ensure the safety of staff and passengers in view of the COVID-19.
- The distance of the tunnel is 20 feet long which can be covered within 10 seconds.
- The tunnel is fitted with a sensor so that when a passenger approaches the tunnel entrance, it starts fogging automatically with WHO approved sanitizer.
- The tunnel has a capacity of sanitizing 25 to 30 persons per minute and consumes approximately 20 ml sanitizer per person. The system runs on the principle of Vaporization process which converts the sanitizer mixture into vapour which forms a uniform layer over the surface which dries up quickly.

#### Gujarat govt's water conservation scheme begins

- **Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani** gave the green signal for the third edition of his government's "**Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan**" , a conservation plan to deepen water bodies in the state before monsoon.
- The scheme, which will continue till June 10, will see the deepening of lakes, check dams and rivers by removing silt, and it will be done with people's participation as well as under MNREGA.
- It would create employment opportunities for the rural population amid the lockdown, adding that norms in place to combat the coronavirus outbreak will be adhered to while carrying out works under the scheme.

- The soil excavated during the drive will be given free of cost to farmer.

#### WCD Ministry takes unique initiative 'doorstep Aanganwadi' to reach out to children during lockdown in Gujarat

- In Gujarat, Women and Child Development Ministry (WCD) has taken a unique initiative called **Umbare Aanganwadi**, i.e **doorstep Aanganwadi** to reach out to children during the lockdown.
- Under **ICDS programme** the government has not only ensured the **nutritious food to the children** but also ensure their overall development.
- The ICDS Department has launched a TV programme called Umbare Aanganwadi which is telecast every alternate day through Vande Gujarat channel as well as Jio TV. Same is also telecast on You Tube.
- The regular theme based modules of Aanganwadi are being taught in an interactive the way in the programme which children can watch with their parents.
- Apart from this, various experts teach different Art and Craft activities in the programme which children can make from home based resources during the lockdown.
- The programme is targeted to around 14 lakh Aanganwadi children in the age group of 3-6 years old. In view of COVID-19, the department has also distributed ready to eat nutritious food packets by AMUL to its beneficiaries including children pregnant women and adolescent girls through the network of around 53 thousand Aanganwadi.

#### Himachal Pradesh

#### World Bank approves Rs 585 cr for Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project

- **World Bank** has approved **82 million US dollars** (585 crore rupees) for the **Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project (HPSRTP)** for upgradation of major roads and modernization of the Public Works Department in the state.
- Under the project, Road construction work of **Barotiwala-Baddi-Sain-Ramshehar** with length of 45 kms, Dadol-Ladraur Road with length of 14.5 kms, Mandi- Riwalsar-Kalkhar of length 28 kms and Raghunathpura-Mandi-Harpura-Bharari road with length of 3.5 kms would be undertaken in tranche -one.
- The target of construction of 900 kilometres road length was fixed for the year 2019-20 but 800 kilometres roads could be constructed during the outbreak of coronavirus.
- On the other hand 1666 crore rupees had been allocated for target construction of 4960 kilometres of roads under **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)** for the year 2020-21.

#### Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

#### Ladakh LG launches IT based applications to combat COVID-19

- **UT Ladakh** administration is taking the help of Information Technology enabled services in the fight against COVID-19 and containment of the spread. Ladakh Lieutenant Governor **RK Mathur** has launched IT based applications and web based dashboards, in **Leh**.
- Ladakh Lieutenant Governor RK Mathur has launched app and web based platforms namely, **connect.ladakh.gov.in** , **covid.ladakh.gov.in** and National Analytical platform for Dealing with Intelligent Training, Tracking, **NAADI App** , developed by C-DAC in containment of COVID-19 pandemic Any Ladakhi stranded staying outside for any reason must register themselves through this web on mobile platforms.
- Basing on the grievances received from the public the back end mechanism co-ordinate with the concerned States all the union territories for redressal.

- This web and app based platforms are next level 2 to the already established control rules in Leh and Kargil districts. NAADI App customized for Ladakh will help the public in quarantine with health tips and advisories. The App also facilitates the administration to track their movements from quarantine.

#### Jammu and Kashmir government releases Rs 183 crore to workers under MGNREGA

- The **Jammu and Kashmir Government** has released **Rs.183 crore** to benefit the underprivileged, wage-seeking households under **Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)**, according to media reports.
- The amount has been transferred electronically to workers. Around 12 lakh transactions have been made, depositing the amount directly into the accounts of beneficiaries within a period of 5-6 days by the officials of Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Jammu & Kashmir, the report stated.
- The direct transfer has been made through the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** via digitally signed Fund Transfer Orders.
- The release of the wages is significant as the 21-day nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak has majorly impacted the livelihood of daily wage workers across the country including in J&K.
- There are approximately **15.50 lakh active workers** under MGNREGA in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### JKSLSA launches helpline under 'Serve-the-Seniors Initiative' for senior citizens

- **Jammu and Kashmir State legal Services Authority (JKSLSA)** has launched a helpline under '**Serve-the-Seniors Initiative**' under the guidance of Justice Gita Mittal, Patron-in-Chief and Justice Rajesh Bindal Executive Chairman of State Legal Services Authority.
- The objective of starting this helpline, comprising is to help and facilitate the senior citizens who live alone and are unable to step out to get medicines, groceries and other essentials in this hour of crisis.
- The helpline numbers of the Nodal Officers who could be contacted in the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh have been declared.

### Jharkhand

#### Robots to serve food, medicine to COVID-19 patients in Jharkhand

- **Robots** will serve **food and give medicine** to Covid-19 patients in two hospitals in **Jharkhand's West Singhbhum** district, in a step to protect doctors and health workers from getting infected with coronavirus.
- Developed by **District Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC)** Aditya Ranjan, the remote-controlled **COBOT-Robotics** will provide food and medicine to patients without human intervention.
- Each bed has been designed like a room where medicine and food will be provided to patients through COBOT-Robotics.
- A team of engineers, under the supervision of the DDC, designed and programmed COBOT-Robotics in a garage in Ranjan's residence

### Madhya Pradesh

#### MP Anganwadi workers, Assistants to get benefit of CM COVID-19 Yoddha Kalyan Yojana

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, around one lakh **Anganwadi workers and Assistants** of the state will get the benefit of **Chief Minister COVID-19 Yoddha Kalyan Yojana**.
- Under this initiative, they will also get a **special health insurance cover of Rs 50 lakhs**. It is noteworthy that special insurance scheme has been launched by the Central Government for health workers who are fighting against COVID-19 epidemic.

- Meanwhile, the state government has given one year exemption to the private schools for renewal of accreditation due to COVID-19 infection. Now the recognition of such schools will be valid till **31 March 2021**.

For all such schools, the prescribed fee for renewal has also been postponed till the next session.

#### **Madhya Pradesh govt launches Jivan Shakti Yojana for women**

- The Chief Minister **Shri Shivraj Singh** launched **Jeevan-Shakti Yojana** at Mantralaya. Under the scheme, women will prepare masks at homes in the urban areas and earn profit. The Government will give **Rs. 11 per mask** to them immediately.
- Shri Chouhan stated that they will not only earn profit by preparing the masks but will also participate in a pious work. Masks will save people's life and prevent the infection from spreading.
- Shri Chouhan informed that women wishing to make masks are required to register themselves by calling the call center number 0755-2700800 by their telephone or mobile phone.
- After registration, they will get the order to make the mask on the mobile itself. They will get order for **minimum 200 masks at a time**. The mask is to be made of cotton cloth.
- After preparing the masks, they will deliver the masks to the nodal officer of their urban body. A process to make payment will be initiated as soon as they deliver the masks and they will receive the payment in their account on the same day or the next day.

#### **MP CM launches 'Jeevan Amrit Yojana' scheme to boost immunity system of citizens**

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, Chief Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** launched **Jeevan Amrit Yojana**, a unique scheme to boost immunity system of citizens of the state.
- Under this scheme, the State Government will distribute packet of special **Trikut Churna** prepared by the **AYUSH Department** free of cost to the citizens.
- Chief Minister stated that in this time of Corona crisis it is necessary that every person has good immunity power, so that this virus does not affect us.
- Under Jeevan Amrit yojna, packets of 50 grams each of the kadha have been prepared by Madhya Pradesh **Laghu Vanopaj Sangh** in collaboration with the Department of AYUSH.
- This kadha made of peepal, ginger and black pepper is being distributed free of cost to one crore people in rural and urban areas of the state.

#### **Maharashtra**

#### **Maharashtra govt launches online self-assessment tool to better identify, assist patients**

- In **Maharashtra**, with over 400 people testing positive for Corona virus, the State Government has now taken the fight against the pandemic online, by launching a **COVID-19 self-assessment tool**.
- The government has created a digital platform, where in citizens can assess their symptoms from the comfort of their homes and later contact authorities if they have any doubts about their condition.
- The State Government has collaborated with **Apollo 24x7** and launched an online tool, which is available at <https://covid-19.maharashtra.gov.in/>, to help people assess their symptoms at home. Immediate medical advice and other relevant contact information are also available on this link.

#### **Manipur**

#### **Food Bank to help the poor and needy introduced in Manipur**

- In Manipur, a new initiative titled '**Food Bank**' has introduced by **Imphal East District Administration** to provide immediate aid in the form of free food to the poor and needy who are facing scarcity of essential commodities due to the long statewide lockdown in view of the threat of **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)**.
- Distribution of food items, hand sanitisers and face masks has already started to Drug Rehabilitation Centres and people living with HIV located in Imphal East District. On the other hand, many donors from various sections of society have responded positively to the initiative.
- The District Administration also informed that donation of essential food items, sanitation and medical aid related items will be accepted for further distribution. Officials, who will be managing the 'Food Bank' have announced to public and they will distribute the items after proper verification of the beneficiaries.

#### **e-comic Textbooks launched in Manipur**

- **Manipur State Education (School) Department** has launched **electronic format comic textbooks** for class III to V for Mathematics, Environmental Studies and English Language in a motive to make up the gaps for the academic situation arises due to lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- State Education Minister Dr. Thokchom Radheshyam officially launched the **e-comic textbooks** at **Imphal**. He stated that electronic format textbooks for other classes will be soon made available.
- The decision to start this learning method has been made after thorough discussion and analysis with the experts and official concerned of the State Department of Education.

#### **Mizoram**

#### **Mizoram: Mobile app 'mCOVID19' to act as online pass for drivers and handymen**

- In **Mizoram**, the **information and communication technology department** has launched a mobile app for the truck drivers and handymen carrying essential goods from outside the state to ensure easy and safe transport during the lockdown period of COVID19 pandemic.
- The mobile app, **mCOVID19** will act as the online pass for the drivers and handymen. Officials stated that the drivers and handymen of interstate carriers will have to do registration of **mPASS** and thereafter an **mPASS ID** will be sent to them via sms, showing information of where the drivers come from, where they are going and what goods they are carrying.
- The mPASS declaration on the mobile App need to be done by all trucks entering Mizoram from other states. Also, after medical screening of the drivers and handymen at entry points the mPASS id will be registered for entry into the state. Different features available in the mCOVID19 app are registration, permission, declaration and Entry Point Scan.

#### **Odisha**

#### **Odisha government, UNICEF launch 'Mo Prativa' to engage young minds amid COVID-19 lockdown**

- **Odisha government** in collaboration with the **UNICEF** has launched an online competition programme '**Mo Prativa**' to engage the children and youth who are staying at home during the lockdown.
- Two themes, '**Being at home during lockdown**' and '**My responsibility as a young citizen during Covid-19**'. Those in the age group of 5 to 18 years can participate in art, slogan writing, short story writing (within 500 words), poem writing and poster making, winning entries will get certificates and may be used in IEC materials.
- The participants will be divided into three groups, from 5 to 10 years, 11 to 16 years and 16 to 18 years. The entries will have to submitted online between 10 am to 6 pm. Sources stated more information about the competition can be obtained from [www.sportsodisha.gov.in](http://www.sportsodisha.gov.in) and [www.wcdodisha.gov.in](http://www.wcdodisha.gov.in).

## Rajasthan

### Rajasthan Government Partners With Healthcare App 'Aayu' to Tackle Coronavirus Pandemic

- **Rajasthan government** has exclusively partnered with **healthcare startup MedCords** to provide 24x7 online consultation and **medicine delivery** to the people of Rajasthan as the State battles to control cases of Coronavirus. Through its integrated solution -**Aayu & Sehat Sathi app**, **MedCords** will help over **68 Million of people** in Rajasthan through this collaboration.
- MedCords' solution is fully adopted in 7 districts of Rajasthan - Kota, Udaipur, Shri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Ajmer, Pali, Jaipur and will be rolling out to complete state within a week. The app is currently helping 10,000+ patients per day with consultations and is providing home delivery of medicines through its Sehat Sathi network.
- With its integrated healthcare ecosystem, **Aayu & Sehat Sathi** is helping millions of Indians families consult with qualified doctors and order necessary medicines, irrespective of their geographical limitations.

## Sikkim

### SIMFED launches mobile ration van in Gangtok

- **Sikkim State Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd (SIMFED)** launched a **mobile ration van** in **Gangtok**, for doorstep delivery of essential commodities and food. Sikkim agriculture minister Lok Nath Sharma launched the van.
- Mr Sharma informed that SIMFED's van will deliver essential commodities like rice, mustard oil, pulse, flour, sugar, salt and soaps at reasonable rates. All preventive measures like social distancing at selling points will be strictly adhered to, he assured.

## Tamil Nadu

### HCL to offer tech support to TN govt in tackling Covid-19

- **Tamil Nadu government** has joined hands with **HCL** to strengthen its response to Covid-19 pandemic by setting up a **Disaster Management-Data Analytics Centre** in the city.
- The State's Disaster Management Centre is responsible for the overall management of disasters across the entire State. HCL will help in improving and expanding the State's disaster management helpline (1070) through technological upgradation, manpower assistance and effective reporting mechanisms.
- The Disaster Management-Data Analytics Centre, will help capture data trends from across all districts in real time and display them live to inform the Government's future decisions on the degree of response needed for each district and also for graded relaxation of the current lockdown to resume economic activities.
- HCL is helping the State to upgrade their existing call centre by implementing an Automatic Call Distribution system; build case flow system to track caller identity, immediate needs and follow through with relevant departments to solve their issues within defined turnaround time.

### Thuthukudi airport in Tamilnadu upgraded to level 3

- **The Thuthukudi airport** in **Tamil Nadu**, near the strategically important Bay of Bengal coast, has been upgraded to **level 3** by the **Airport Authority of India**. This signifies a rise in the operational potentials of the airport and increases the scope of getting more funds for expansion activities.
- The airport run way is at present being extended to 3115 metres to enable bigger planes to use it. Plans are also in the pipeline for starting hopping flights to nearby destinations like Trivandrum, Kochi, Madurai etc.

- With the work of setting up a 720 acre industrial park in Ththukudi well underway, the upgrading of Thuthukudi airport has been welcomed by general public, industrialists and the commercial circles.

## Telangana

### Telangana govt sets up 12 Covid-19 'containment clusters' in Hyderabad

- **Telangana government** has decided to set up 12 '**containment clusters**' in the city with a collective pool of 89 positive cases.
- The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has set up the clusters in various areas of the city — Ramgopalpet, Sheikhpeta, Red Hills, Malakpet-Santoshnagar, Chandrayangutta, Alwal, Moosapeta, Kukatpally, Qutubullapur -Gajularamaram, Mayurinagar, Yosufguda and Chandanagar.
- Special teams will conduct door-to-door survey and identify people with Covid-19 symptoms. If need be, they will collect samples and send them for testing.

### 7.4 mn bank accounts to be credited with Rs 1,500 in Telangana

- Telangana government would credit around **7.4 million bank accounts** with **Rs 1,500** as support for the needy during the coronavirus-induced lockdown, Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao stated.
- Total of **Rs 11.12 billion** has been transferred by the government to the banks.
- Rao, who is also the working president of the ruling party TRS, stated that more than three lakh tonnes of free rice has been distributed to 87 per cent of the 76 lakh beneficiaries in the state.
- The state government had announced that in view of the hardships faced by people due to lockdown, each of the nearly 8.8 million food security cardholders in the state would be given 12 kg of rice and each of these families would be given one-time support of Rs 1,500 to meet expenditure on other essential commodities.

### Disinfectant tunnel installed at DGP office in Hyderabad

- **3V Safe Tunnel, a disinfectant tunnel** was installed at the Director General of Police's office in **Telangana State** by **S3V Vascular Technologies Private Limited**.
- Police personnel and healthcare professionals are in the front-line in the fight against COVID-19 and installing this disinfection tunnel is a step towards protecting them by minimizing transmission. This is the **first-of-its-kind tunnel** to be installed in Telangana State.
- S3V Vascular Technologies Private Limited is a Medical Device company that manufactures devices for the brain and heart.
- **3V Safe Tunnel** is one of the many methods to **reduce local transmission of COVID-19 virus**.
- The tunnel uses an **aerosol technology** wherein the disinfectant solution is atomized into aerosol with a particle size of 1.5 microns to 20 microns.
- The flow pattern of the disinfectant solution is designed to provide maximum protection to people passing through the tunnel in around 20 seconds. The atomized liquid spray saturates the environment and thus disinfects all surfaces, even those that are not directly exposed to the nozzles.
- The disinfectant used consists of a combination of a **water-soluble polymer and iodine**. The disinfectant is non-volatile, having no detectable vapor pressure, forms a film which releases free iodine, thus enabling prolonged viricidal and bactericidal activity and sanitizing the surfaces. The solution has been proved to be effective against SARS, MERS and Ebola viruses.

### TCS partners with Telangana State Council of Higher Education

- A strategic business unit of **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** has partnered with the **Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE)** to prepare college students for future job readiness.
- Under the partnership, a set of curated courseware will be made available free of cost to four lakh students across 1,500 institutions of higher education in the state effective this academic year.
- The courses cover a plethora of topics that will improve the employability quotient of students and equip them to compete in the job market after they graduate.
- The learning will be self-paced and the courses are accessible anytime, anywhere and on any device, through the **TSCHE website**. Individual institutions can mandate for credits as appropriate.
- TSCHE Chairman T Papi Reddy stated the council is pleased to partner with TCS iON to strengthen the students and equip them with all the necessary skills that will help them to compete well in the job market.

### Uttarakhand

#### Jim Corbett becomes India's first quarantine facility for animals

- India's oldest National Park **Jim Corbett**, situated in **Uttarakhand's Paurhi Garhwal region**, has built **isolation wards for animals**.
- At least 10 quarantine centres are being prepared within the premises to contain animals.
- Taking further preventive measures, the authorities have intensified video surveillance of animals. Any animal with symptoms will be quarantined, the cameras installed in the vicinity of the national park will record the cold and cough symptoms of animals.
- In a bid to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to tigers through the humans, the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** has recently issued a direction that all workers coming in contact with tigers and elephants should be tested for novel coronavirus.
- The tiger Welfare body also asked the parks to immediately inform about the animals falling ill.

### Uttar Pradesh

#### Uttar Pradesh govt decides to promote all students from class 6 to 9 & 11 following lockdown

- **Uttar Pradesh government** has decided to promote all students from **classes 6 to 9 and class 11** affiliated with UP Board without final exams. Now these students will move to the next grade without appearing for the final examinations.
- The announcement came as a relief for lakhs of students, whose examination preparations and academics were hampered due to closure of schools and other educational institutions amid COVID-19 outbreak.
- Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Dr Dinesh Sharma stated that students from classes 9 to 12 will be taught via e-learning and virtual classes through WhatsApp from April 20.
- He stated that UP board students can be taught with the help of e-content at **Diksha portal** and suggested that Doordarshan can also prove strong medium for the help of students.

#### UP first state to get ICMR nod for 'pool testing' of samples for coronavirus

- **Uttar Pradesh** has become the first state in India to get the approval by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** for "**pool testing**" of samples of COVID-19 suspects in order to increase the rate of sample testing in the state with soaring cases.
- The "pool testing" involves testing upto **five samples** in a single test. So far, one sample is being tested at a time.

- Currently, the state health authorities are collecting over 2200 samples daily and around 2000 are being tested on a daily basis.
- Under pool testing, all 10 samples would be mixed and tested, if the mixture tests negative, then no further test of any of the 10 suspects would be tested but if the mixture gives indication of coronavirus strains, then individual testing would be held.

#### Uttar Pradesh becomes first state to geotag community kitchens

- **Uttar Pradesh** has become the first state in the country to **geotag** its **7,368 community kitchens** and community shelters across **75 districts** which produce **12 lakh food packets** a day, a senior official stated.
- The state government has also tied up with Google to '**Geo-map**' the locations of all these establishments on the Google Maps app for ease of beneficiaries, he stated.
- The Yogi Adityanath government had anticipated the crisis early on and successfully started establishing community kitchens by mobilising state resources on a massive scale and also reaching out to civil society, religious establishments and non-governmental organisations

#### King George Medical University in Lucknow becomes 1st govt hospital in country to successfully launch Plasma Therapy Treatment for COVID-19

- **The King George Medical University in Uttar Pradesh** has become the first government hospital in the country to successfully launch the **plasma therapy treatment** for the COVID-19 patients.
- Vice Chancellor of the KGMU Prof MLB Bhatt termed it a proud moment for university and stated that we were preparing for the Plasma Therapy right from the approval from Indian Council of Medical Research. The plasma was already secured from the three recovered COVID-19 patients who were treated at KGMU itself.
- Assistant Professor of the medicine department Dr. D Himashu stated that COVID-19 patient who was on ventilator has shown signs of recovery and second dose of the plasma transfusion therapy can be given. If this patient recovers successfully then it will be a great step in treating the serious patients with the help of plasma transfusion therapy.

#### Revision Points

State	Capital	Chief Minister	Governor
Andhra Pradesh	Amaravati	Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy	BiswaBhusanHarichandan
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar	Pema Khandu	Brigadier BD Mishra
Assam	Dispur	SarabanandaSonowal	Jagdish Mukhi
Bihar	Patna	Nitish Kumar	Phagu Chauhan
Chhattisgarh	Raipur	Bhupesh Baghel	AnusuiyaUikey
Goa	Panaji	Pramod Sawant	S.P Malik
Gujarat	Gandhi Nagar	Vijaybhai R. Rupani	Acharya Devvrat
Haryana	Chandigarh	Manohar Lal Khattar	Satyadev Narayan Arya
Himachal	Shimla	Jai Ram Thakur	BandaruDattatraya

Pradesh			
Jharkhand	Ranchi	Hemant Soren	Draupadi Murmu
Karnataka	Bengaluru	B S Yediyurappa	VajubhaiRudabhaiVala
Kerala	Thiruvananthapuram	Pinarayi Vijayan	Arif Mohammed Khan
Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	Shivraj Singh Chouhan	Lalji Tandon
Maharashtra	Mumbai	Uddhav Thackrey	Bhagat Singh Koshyari
Manipur	Imphal	N Biren Singh	Padmanabha Balkrishna Acharya (Add. Charge)
Meghalaya	Shillong	Conrad Sangma	RN Ravi (Additional Charge)
Mizoram	Aizawl	Pu Zoramthanga	P S Sreedharan Pillai
Nagaland	Kohima	Neiphiu Rio	RN Ravi
Odisha	Bhubaneshwar	Naveen Patnaik	Ganeshi Lal
Punjab	Chandigarh	Amarinder Singh	V P Singh Badnore
Rajasthan	Jaipur	Ashok Gehlot	Kalraj Mishra
Sikkim	Gangtok	Prem Singh Tamang(PS Golay)	Ganga Prasad
Tamil Nadu	Chennai	Edappadi K. Palaniswami	Banwarilal Purohit
Telangana	Hyderabad	K. Chandrasekhar Rao	TamilisaiSoundararajan
Tripura	Agartala	Biplab Kumar Deb	Ramesh Bais
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	Yogi Adityanath	Anandiben Patel
Uttarakhand	Dehradun	Trivendra Singh Rawat	Baby Rani Maurya
West Bengal	Kolkata	Mamata Banerjee	Jagdeep Dhankhar

### Important National News

#### Foreign trade policy extended for one year till March 2021

- The government extended the existing **foreign trade policy (2015-20)** for one year till **March 2021** amid coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown to contain the virus spread.
- The existing foreign trade policy 2015-20 which is valid up to **March 31** this year is extended up to **March 31, 2021**. Various other changes are also made extending the date of exemptions by one year and extending validity of DFIA and EPCG authorisations for import purposes. The directorate general of foreign trade stated in a notification.

- Exports during April-February this fiscal dipped by 1.5 per cent to USD 292.91 billion.
- Imports during the period declined by 7.30 per cent to USD 436 billion, leaving a trade deficit of USD 143.12 billion.
- **Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG)** is an export promotion scheme under which an exporter can import certain amount of capital goods at zero duty for upgrading technology related with exports.
- Under the **Duty Free Import Authorisation (DFIA)** scheme, exporters are allowed to import certain goods like sugar at zero duty.

#### Tourism Ministry launches 'Stranded in India' to help foreign tourists

- The **Ministry of Tourism** has launched a portal '**Stranded in India**' to help foreign tourists who are stuck in various parts of the country.
- Ministry of Tourism has come up with a portal to disseminate information regarding the services that can be availed by foreign tourists who are stuck far away from their home land, stated the official release.
- The portal strandedinindia.com consists of information around **Covid-19 helpline numbers** and call centres that foreign tourists can reach out for help, information around Ministry of External Affairs control centers along with their contact information and information around state-based, regional tourism support infrastructure.

#### Govt extends crop loan interest benefits till May 31

- Farmers who have taken **short-term crop loans** will get time till **May 31** to repay the loan without losing the benefit of interest subvention and other additional incentives offered by the government on timely repayment, an official statement stated.
- The government has decided to extend the benefit of **2 per cent interest subvention** to banks and **3 per cent incentive** on prompt repayment to all farmers up to May 31 for all crop loans up to **Rs 3 lakh** given by banks which have become due or are becoming due between March 1 and May 31 this year.
- The decision would make it possible for farmers to enjoy the effective interest rate of **4 per cent on crop loans** up to **Rs 3 lakh** for an extended period without attracting any penalty.

#### DARPG's National Monitoring Dashboard launched for COVID-19 Grievances

- Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions **Dr. JitendraSingh** launched **DARPG's National Monitoring Dashboard** on COVID-19 Grievances. The National Monitoring Dashboard was developed and implemented at <https://darpg.gov.in> where COVID-19 related grievances are monitored on priority basis by a technical team of DARPG.
- Dr. Jitendra Singh stated that he had personally reviewed the status of **262 grievances** of Central Government and 83 grievances of State Governments received on Day 1 and directed officers in the DARPG to pursue with line of Ministries and State Governments.
- The portal will be monitored at senior levels in Government on a daily basis.

#### Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launches new features of e-NAM Platform

- **Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar** launched new features of **National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)** Platform. It will help strengthen agriculture marketing by farmers which will reduce their need to come to wholesale mandis for selling their harvested produce, at a time when there is critical need to decongest mandis to effectively fight against COVID-19.
- These software modules are warehouse based trading module in **e-NAM software** and Farmer Producer Organisation trading module in e-NAM.

- Mr Tomar reiterated that e-NAM was launched in 2016 as a pan-India electronic trade portal linking Agricultural Produce Market Committee - APMCs across the States. He stated, already 585 mandis in 16 States and two Union Territories have been integrated on e-NAM portal.
- He also stated that e-NAM will be soon expanded to cover additional 415 mandis, which will take the total number of e-NAM mandis to 1,000. The Agriculture Minister stated, e-NAM provides for contactless remote bidding and mobile-based any time payment for which traders do not need to either visit mandis or banks for the same.

#### **C-DOT and Telecom Service Providers develop COVID Quarantine Alert System**

- The **Department of Telecommunication** and **C-DOT** in coordination with **Telecom Service Providers** have developed and tested an application which automatically triggers an email or SMS if any identified corona positive person moves away from their quarantine location.
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has encouraged state government agencies to use the COVID Quarantine Alert system.
- A Standard Operating Procedure for location based monitoring of potential cases from the telecom network data has been established. Large numbers of requests from state agencies are already coming in from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Haryana, and Bihar.

#### **MoS HRD and IT, Sanjay Dhotre launches 'Hack the Crisis-India' hackathon**

- **Minister of State Human Resource Development** and **IT Sanjay Dhotre** launched **Hack the Crisis - India**, an Online Hackathon to find working solutions for overcoming COVID-19 pandemic.
- This hackathon is part of a global initiative and is being organised by '**Hack A Cause - India**' and '**FICCI Ladies Organization Pune**' and supported by **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- The aim of this hackathon is to strengthen fight against COVID-19.
- Mr Dhotre stated that over 2,000 teams and over 15,000 participants will be enhancing their working prototypes in 48 hour hackathon.

#### **Home Minister Amit Shah approves release of Rs 11,092 Cr under SDRMF to all States**

- **Home Minister Amit Shah** has approved the release of **Rs 11,092 crore** under the **State Disaster Risk Management Fund, SDRMF** to all States. Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his video conference meeting with the Chief Ministers had assured about it.
- The Centre has released in advance its share of first installment of State Disaster Risk Management Fund for the year 2020-21 with a view to augment funds available with the State Governments.
- With a view to make additional funds available to the State Governments for taking preventive and mitigation measures for containment of COVID-19, Centre on 14th March has already made a special dispensation for utilization of State Disaster Response Fund, SDRF.
- This Fund was allowed to be utilized for setting up quarantine facilities, sample collection and screening, setting up additional testing laboratories, cost of consumables, purchase of personal protection equipment for healthcare, municipal, police and fire authorities, purchase of thermal scanners, ventilators, air purifiers, and consumables for Government hospitals.

#### **DST sets up rapid response centre at SINE, IIT Bombay to combat COVID-19**

- **Department of Science & Technology, Government of India** in a rapid response to combat COVID-19 global pandemic approved setting up of a **Centre for Augmenting WAR** with COVID-19 Health Crisis (**CAWACH**) at a total cost of Rs 56 Cr to scout, evaluate and support the innovations and start-ups that address COVID-19 challenges.

- The **Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE)**, a technology business incubator at **IIT Bombay** supported by DST has been identified as the Implementing Agency of the CAWACH.
- The CAWACH's mandate will be to extend timely support to potential startups by way of the requisite financial assistance and fund deployment targeting innovations that are deployable in the market within next 6 months.
- CAWACH will identify upto 50 innovations and startups that are in the area of novel, low cost, safe and effective ventilators, respiratory aids, protective gears, novel solutions for sanitizers, disinfectants, diagnostics, therapeutics, informatics and any effective interventions to control COVID-19.

#### Finance ministry releases Rs17,287 crore to states to fight Covid-19 outbreak

- **Finance ministry** released **Rs.17,287 crore** to different states on account of Centre's share of **state disaster response mitigation fund (SDRMF)** as well as revenue deficit grants in order to enhance financial resources of states to fight the Covid-19 outbreak.
- While the first installment of SDRMF amounts to **Rs.11,092 crore**, the initial disbursement of post-devolution revenue deficit grant for 14 states as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission (FFC) comes to Rs6,195 crore.
- Under the SDRMF, Maharashtra received the highest amount of Rs1,611 crore, followed by Madhya Pradesh ( Rs910 crore) and Odisha ( Rs802 crore), while under the revenue deficit grants, Kerala received Rs1,277 crore followed by Himachal Pradesh ( Rs953 crore) and Punjab ( Rs638 crore).
- States like Kerala had earlier objected the finance ministry's move to allocate only 40% of the Rs74,340 crore revenue deficit grants for FY21 recommended by the FFC despite accepted the recommendation. Of the Rs74,340 crore revenue deficit grants, the largest beneficiaries of the recommendation are Kerala ( Rs15,323 crore), Himachal Pradesh ( Rs11,431 crore), Punjab ( Rs7,659 crore), Assam ( Rs7,579 crore), Andhra Pradesh ( Rs5,897 crore), Uttarakhand ( Rs5,076 crore) and West Bengal ( Rs5,013 crore).

#### IAS, IPS officers' associations form 'Caruna', an initiative to fight Coronavirus

- Associations representing officers of **Central Civil Services**, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), have formed an initiative called '**Caruna**' to support and supplement the government's efforts in fighting coronavirus, an official stated.
- The acronym '**Caruna**' stands for **Civil Services Associations Reach to Support in Natural Disasters** and **represents a collaborative platform**, on which civil servants, industry leaders, NGO professionals and IT professionals among others have come together to contribute their time and abilities.

#### Indian Railways develops low-cost ventilator

- The **Indian Railways** has developed a **low-cost ventilator, Jeevan**, at its **Kapurthala Rail Coach Factory, Punjab**.
- The prototype is awaiting clearance from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). This Ventilator will cost Rs 10,00-15,000 only. Once it gets clearance from ICMR, Railways is ready for its mass production.
- The Indian Railways has transformed its coaches into isolation wards to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Govt constitutes Empowered Group for coordinating COVID-19 related Response Activities

- **Government** has constituted an **Empowered Group** chaired by **NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant** for coordinating with Private Sector, NGOs and International Organisations for COVID-19-related Response Activities. It will address the issues pertaining to identification of problems, effective solutions and formulation of plans with three groups of stakeholders.
- First group is the UN agencies, **World Bank** and **Asian Development Bank**, second is Civil Society Organisations and development partners and the third group is of Industry associations - CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, NASSCOM.

- All 3 groups have proactively pointed out the areas where they need support which the government is following up. They have also been put in touch with other Empowered Groups for faster and more effective response and coordination.
- The Empowered Group had detailed meetings with UN Resident Coordinator for India, and country heads of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, ILO, UN Women, UN-Habitat, FAO, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank.

#### Google maps partners with government, highlights public food, night shelters across 31 Indian cities

- **Google maps** will now display **public food shelters** and **public night shelters** to users across 31 cities in India.
- Public Food Shelters and Public Night Shelters can now be found on **Google Maps**, for 31 cities (more Shelters, Cities being added). Search on Google or Google Maps for "**Food Shelter Near Me**" or "**Night Shelter Near Me**" to find the closest shelter," the centre tweeted from its citizen engagement platform MyGov's account.
- The feature was built by **Google India** in association with the **government** and the **smart cities** team. The feature is meant to help users locate shelters assisting labourers and workers stranded amid the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the country, with food and shelter.

#### NHAI achieves highest ever construction of National Highways in FY 2019-20

- **National Highway Authority of India**, NHAI has achieved highest ever construction of National Highways in financial year 2019-20.
- NHAI stated, it has accomplished construction of **three thousand 979 kilometre** of national highways and this is the highest ever highway construction achieved in a financial year by NHAI.
- The authority stated, in 2018-19, NHAI had constructed three thousand 380 Kilometre. It stated, NHAI is committed to provide a smooth ride on national highways in the country.

#### Cabinet approves ordinance to reduce salaries of PM, Ministers, MPs by 30% for a year

- The **Union Cabinet** approved a **30% cut** in the salaries of all Members of Parliament and a two-year suspension of the **MP Local Area Development (MPLAD)** scheme so that the amount saved can go to the Consolidated Fund of India to fight COVID-19.
- Mr. Javadekar stated all MPs, including the Prime Minister and his Council of Ministers, would take the salary cut for financial year 2020-2021. In addition, the Cabinet had decided to suspend the MPLAD funds for **2020-2021** and **2021-2022**. Many MPs had already pledged to use their MPLAD funds, Rs.5 crore a year, for efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic.
- Mr. Javadekar stated President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, as well as all Governors, had decided of their own volition to take a 30% salary cut. All the amount saved would go to the Consolidated Fund of India.

#### Govt removes restrictions on export of 12 pharma items

- **DGFT** allows export of **APIs**, formulations including vitamins, antibiotics after producers say they have surplus stocks
- The Centre has allowed export of a dozen active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), including antibiotics, vitamins and hormones as well as their formulations, that were placed under restriction early last month to avoid a domestic shortage due to the Covid-19 outbreak.
- A notification, amending the one issued on March 3, was put up by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** specifying that export of the 12 identified APIs was now free.
- These APIs include **Tinidazole, Metronidazole, Acyclovir, Vitamin B1, B6, B12, Progesterone, Chloramphenicol, Erythromycin salts, Neomycin, Clindamycin salts and Ornidazole.**

### Ministry of Human Resources Development launches "Samadhan" a challenge to fight against covid19 and future challenges

- The Innovation Cell of the **Ministry of Human Resources Development** and **All India Council for Technical Education** in collaboration with Forge and InnovatioCuris launched a mega online challenge - **SAMADHAN** - to test the ability of students to innovate.
- The students participating in this challenge will search and develop such measures that can be made available to the government agencies, health services, hospitals and other services for quick solutions to the Coronavirus epidemic and other such calamities.
- Apart from this, through this "Samadhan" challenge, work will be done to make citizens aware, to motivate them, to face any challenge, to prevent any crisis and to help people get livelihood.
- Under the "Samadhan" challenge, the students and faculty will be motivated for doing new experiments and new discoveries and provide them with a strong base leading to spirit of experimentation and discovery. The success of this program depends on how effective are the ideas of participating contestants with ability to find solutions, technically and commercially, which in turn will help fight the epidemic like coronavirus.

### Union Health Ministry announces insurance cover for medical workers fighting COVID-19

- **Union Health Ministry** stated medical professionals losing lives due to coronavirus or while treating such patients will be covered under the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan** Package Insurance scheme.
- Under the scheme, **22.12 lakh public health** care providers and community health workers will get an insurance cover of **Rs 50 lakh**.
- The insurance cover will also include private hospital staff, retired staff, volunteers, contract workers, daily wagers and even outsourced staff hired by the central and state governments and autonomous healthcare institutions.
- The insurance will provide a "comprehensive personal accident cover of Rs 50 lakh to a total of around 22.12 lakh public healthcare providers, including community health workers, who may have to be in direct contact and care of patients suffering from coronavirus infection and at the risk of being impacted by this.
- The duration of the policy is **90 days**, starting from March 30. There is no age limit for this scheme and individual enrolment is not required.
- The ministry added that individuals are required to pay any premium to be eligible under the scheme.

### Center launches learning platform to combat COVID-19

- The Center has announced the launch of a **learning platform to combat COVID-19** for all front-line workers to equip them with the training and in coping with Pandemic.
- The target groups for the platform, **igot.gov.in** are Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Hygiene Workers, Technicians, Auxiliary Nursing Midwives, ANMs, Central & State Govt. Officers, Civil Defence Officials, various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corpz, NCC, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, NYKS, National Service Scheme, NSS, Indian Red Cross Society, Bharat Scouts and Guides and other volunteers.
- The platform delivers curated, role-specific content, to each learner at his place of work or home and to any device of his choice. **iGOT** platform is designed to population scale, and will provide training to around 1.50 crore workers and volunteers in the coming weeks.
- To begin with nine courses on iGOT have been launched on topics like Basics of COVID, ICU Care and Ventilation Management, Clinical Management, Infection Prevention through PPE, Infection Control and Prevention, Quarantine and Isolation, Laboratory Sample Collection and Testing, Management of COVID 19 Cases, COVID 19 Training.

### Centre approves COVID-19 emergency package for states, UTs

- The Centre has approved the **COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness** package aimed at boosting national and state health systems to support procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs, and strengthening of surveillance activities.
- The Health Ministry stated the **100 per cent centrally funded** package will be implemented in three phases from **January 2020 to March 2024**.
- The Union Health Ministry is releasing funds for states and Union territories under the National Health Mission for implementation of **phase 1 up to June 2020**.
- The key activities to be implemented under Phase 1 include support to states and UTs for development of dedicated COVID-19 hospitals, isolation blocks, ICUs with ventilators oxygen supply in hospitals, strengthening of laboratories, hiring of additional human resources and incentives to human resource and community health volunteers.
- The ministry has also asked states and UTs to use the funds for the procurement of personal protective equipment, N-95 masks and ventilators over and above what is being procured and supplied by the central government.
- The project will be implemented in three phases during the period January 2020 to March 2024 -- Phase 1 from January to June 2020, **phase 2 from July to March 2021** and **phase 3 from April 2021 to March 2024**.

#### Govt sanctions Rs 15000 cr for COVID-19 Emergency response

- The Centre has sanctioned **15000 crore rupees** for India **COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package**. Out of it, **seven thousand 774 crore rupees** will be utilized for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response and rest for medium-term support of one to four years to be provided under mission mode approach.
- The key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 in the country through the development of diagnostics and COVID-19 dedicated treatment facilities, centralized procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients.
- Besides, the aim of the package is also to strengthen and build resilient National and State health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreak. It also include setting up of laboratories and bolster surveillance activities, bio-security preparedness, pandemic research and proactively engage communities and conduct risk communication activities.
- These interventions and initiatives would be implemented under the overall umbrella of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

#### Indian Railways Develops mobile doctor booth for zero-contact check-ups

- **Indian Railways' Coach Rehabilitation Workshop, Bhopal** which falls under the **West Central Railway zone**, has developed a **mobile doctor booth** named **Charak** with zero contact check-up facility.
- This will facilitate zero-contact check-ups in light of the novel coronavirus outbreak as well as ensure the safety of the medical professionals/doctors owing to the "viral barrier chamber". The system will allow **doctors to examine patients without direct physical contact**, thereby protecting them from the hazards of viral exposure.
- As it reduces the disposal of single-use **Polypropylene PPEs**, there will be a reduction in bio-medical waste. The doctor booth is a mobile unit, thus, it can be easily transported to remote locations and rural areas. Moreover, it enabled to go within 500 m area by hand transport. Also, the mobile doctor booth is an economical and low-cost viral barrier for doctors.

#### Union HRD Minister launches 'Bharat Padhe Online' campaign to invite ideas to improve online education ecosystem

- The **Union Minister of Human Resource Development Ramesh Pokhriyal** launched a week long '**Bharat Padhe Online**' campaign for crowd sourcing of ideas for improving online education ecosystem of India.
- This campaign aims to invite all the best brains in the country to share suggestions/solutions directly with HRD Ministry to overcome constraints of online education.
- Ideas can be shared on **bharatpadheonline.mhrd@gmail.com** and on twitter by using **#BharatPadheOnline** till 16th April 2020.
- The schools, colleges and all academic institutions have been closed for the period and several schools have started taking classes online so as to ensure that students do not suffer.

#### **NCW launches WhatsApp number to report cases of domestic violence**

- The **National Commission for Women, NCW** launched a **WhatsApp number 7217735372** to report cases of domestic violence, which have seen a rise during the lockdown period.
- The Commission urged people to report such cases through messages on the number so that the agency can provide support and assistance to women in distress or experiencing domestic violence.
- The number has only been launched for the period of COVID-19 lockdown till normal offices resume.
- National Commission of Women **Chairperson Rekha Sharma** recently stated domestic violence complaints have been increasing by the day since the nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25, with 69 complaints received just through email.

#### **Centre, TN Govt launch Aarogya Setu IVRS**

- The **Central and Tamil Nadu governments** launched the **Aarogya Setu Interactive Voice Response System** service which is aimed at guiding people, speed up preventing virus spread, detection, tracking and treatment measures.
- The service, a joint initiative of the **State information technology and health** and the **Centre's telecommunications departments** and the **IIT Madras** offers people the facility to converse in their mother tongue.
- This initiative, is also available for non-smart phones, he stated adding there were nearly 120 crore plus mobile phones in the country and reaching the common people and give them a helping hand is the idea behind the initiative.
- The IVRS initiative will support timely detection, assistance and guidance which would be a big emotional support, he stated.
- People can give a missed call or send an SMS to 9499912345 and the system calls them back and asks simple questions and based on the reply provided by them, it gives them the right advice on coronavirus.

#### **UGC constitutes committee to promote online learning amid nationwide lockdown**

- **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has constituted a committee to promote **online learning**. **UGC Chairman DP Singh** stated it has also formed a committee to look after the examinations and academic calendar in the present circumstances
- He stated under the lockdown situation, it is essential to think about how the prescribed syllabus can be completed, what type of examination system would be followed.
- UGC will issue guidelines for universities in consultation with **Union HRD Ministry**. He stated to maintain social distancing, online learning and e-education is the only way out. UGC Chairman stated online education is need of the hour for students, teachers and education system as a whole

#### **Govt plans to set up 20 lakh 'Suraksha Stores' to sell daily essentials**

- The government plans to set up a chain of **20 lakh retail shops** called '**Suraksha Stores**' across India which will provide daily essentials to citizens while maintaining stringent safety norms.
- The Suraksha Stores initiative will convert the **neighbourhood kirana** stores into sanitised retail outlets selling daily essentials while adhering to safety norms such as social distancing and sanitisation to control the spread
- Under the initiative, the government plans to convert the neighbourhood Kirana stores into sanitised retail outlets which will be run by ensuring the tenets of social distancing and sanitisation. This would help contain the spread of COVID-19 while also maintaining the supply of essentials to the masses. The stores would offer groceries, consumer durables and apparel and salons to the public.

#### **IFFCO runs hundreds of awareness campaigns on Ground Zero**

- **Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative, IFFCO**, the leading cooperative society of the world is leading efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 at ground **zero**. IFFCO is continuously organizing '**Break the CORONA Chain**' **Social Awareness Campaign** on Ground zero in different states across the country.
- Under the banner of this social awareness campaign over 60 camps were organized and are continuously being organized on a daily basis highlighting the preventive and precautionary measures among the masses. Even during the pandemic, all of IFFCO's plants remain fully operational given the critical importance of the Industry.
- Under this campaign, aspects like Social distancing, Proper sanitization, Maintaining a healthy diet and Prevention through- covering of face by masks or Gamchha are being emphasized.
- Also, over 3.5 Lakh Vitamin-C Tablets, 50,000 medicated soaps, 20,000 masks, 5,000 sanitizers and numerous medical kits were distributed at different locations all across India.
- Fertilizer sector is identified as a critical sector by the Government of India, thousands of labourers and employees are working tirelessly even during the pandemic to ensure farmers of the country face no shortage of plant nutrients.
- Ration kits with food material are also being provided to migrant families and families of labourers in different states. IFFCO has contributed 25 crore rupees to PM - CARES Fund.

#### **Fit India, CBSE to organise 1st-ever live fitness sessions for School students**

- **Fit India and CBSE** will organise first-ever live **fitness sessions** for school students in the second phase of lockdown. Live sessions will commence from 9:30 morning and students can get access to these live sessions on Facebook and Instagram handles of Fit India Movement and CBSE.
- During the programme guidelines of **Ministry of AYUSH** to stay healthy will be shared with students. Owing to the nation-wide lockdown due to Covid19 up to 3rd May and following Prime Minister's call to all citizens to increase immunity and stay healthy, Fit India and CBSE have taken this unique initiative to ensure fitness of all school children.
- All the sessions will also be available on YouTube so that students can access it at their convenience as well.

#### **DST creates Integrated geospatial platform to help area-specific strategies & decisions in COVID-19 outbreak**

- **Department of Science and Technology of Government of India** has created an **Integrated Geospatial Platform** out of available **geospatial datasets**, standards-based services, and analytic tools to help decision making during the current COVID-19 outbreak and aid devising area-specific strategies to handle the socio-economic impact in the recovery phase.
- The platform is initially expected to strengthen the **public health delivery system** of the State and Central Governments and subsequently provide the necessary geospatial information support to citizens and agencies dealing with the challenges related to health, socio-economic distress, and livelihood challenges.

- The mobile application **SAHYOG**, as well as the web portal (<https://indiamaps.gov.in/soiapp/>) prepared and managed by the **Survey of India**. It has been customized to collect COVID-19 specific geospatial datasets through community engagement to augment the response activities by Government of India to the pandemic.
- This mobile application will complement the AAROGYA-SETU mobile app launched by the Centre for Contact tracing, Public awareness, and Self-assessment objectives. State Spatial Data Infrastructure in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir have been providing collateral standards-based geospatial data services to the State and District Level Authorities.

#### **Govt launches All India Agri Transport Call Centre for inter-state movement of perishables**

- **Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar** launched the **All India Agri Transport Call Centre** at **Krishi Bhavan** in **New Delhi**. This will facilitate inter-state movement of perishables in the current situation of lockdown due to the COVID-19 threat.
- The Call Centre numbers are 18001804200 and 14488. These numbers can be called from any mobile or landline phones any time of the day or night.
- The **24x7 service** All India Agri Transport Call Centre is an initiative of the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare for coordination between states for inter-state movement of perishables.

#### **MEA announces COVID-19 training program for healthcare professionals from SAARC countries**

- The **External Affairs Ministry** has announced a training programme on COVID-19 from April 17 for healthcare professionals from **SAARC countries**.
- The training programme will be carried out by the Central government's **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme**.
- India proposed setting up of a common electronic platform for all SAARC nations to share expertise and best practices to jointly combat the spread of coronavirus.

#### **Centre releases 7,300 crore rupees to States & UTs under MGNREGS**

- Centre has released **7,300 crore rupees** to the States and Union Territories under **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** to liquidate pending dues of last financial year but also the wage dues for the first fortnight of 2020-21. Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar conducted a detailed review of all flagship schemes of the Rural Development.
- Mr Tomar expressed satisfaction that over **93 thousand Self Help Group members** are engaged in manufacturing of cotton protective face covers as well as sanitizers and are also running community kitchens across the country.
- Mr Tomar noted that under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin), over **800 crore rupees** has been released to the States. He advised that around 40 lakh beneficiaries of this scheme who have received second and third instalment of funds must be assisted in a proactive manner to quickly complete their housing units.

#### **Govt-appointed panel proposes institutional framework for valuers, moots National Institute of Valuers**

- The government-appointed committee of experts has proposed an **institutional framework** for valuers by way of setting up the National Institute of Valuers. The panel, headed by **IBBI (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India) Chairperson M S Sahoo**, has also submitted the '**Draft Valuers Bill, 2020**'.
- The corporate affairs ministry sought comments on the bill, which has recommended setting up of the institute. The deadline for submitting comments is May 14. The panel was constituted by the ministry on August 30, 2019 to examine the need for an institutional framework for regulation and development of valuation profession.

- According to the committee, there should be enactment of an exclusive statute to provide for the establishment of the institute to protect the interests of users of valuation services in India and to promote the development of, and to regulate the profession of valuers and market for valuation services.
- The institute shall register and regulate Valuer Institutes, VPOs (Valuation Professional Organisations) and Valuers. Valuer Institutes, who would compete among themselves for excellence, shall offer courses and conduct internal examinations, while the institute shall conduct a screening examination for admission to the courses and a qualifying examination for registration as valuers," the report stated.
- Among others, the panel has suggested measures to ensure a minimum quality of valuation services across the market. Only valuers registered under the proposed institutional framework should be permitted to render valuation services. Such mandatory provision, however, may start with valuation services under the Companies Act, 2013 and Code, followed by phased inclusion of valuation services under other laws.

#### **Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman attends the Plenary Meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) of the IMF through video-conference**

- Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs **Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman** attended through video-conference the Plenary Meeting of the **International Monetary and Financial Committee**, the Ministerial-level committee of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.
- The discussions at the meeting were based on IMF Managing Director's Global Policy Agenda titled, "**Exceptional Times – Exceptional Action**". The members of the IMFC updated the committee on the actions and measures taken by member countries to combat COVID-19, and also remarked on IMF's crisis-response package to address global liquidity and members' financing needs.
- The Finance Minister informed the IMFC about India's role as a responsible member of the global community by providing critical medicines to other nations. She also mentioned about Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's initiative of creating a COVID-19 Emergency Fund for the SAARC region at the SAARC Leaders' video-meeting.

#### **NIRDPR and UNICEF training community leaders online to combat COVID-19**

- More than **28.33 lakh community** leaders are being trained through **online programmes** to practise social behaviours required to control the transmission of COVID-19 cases in villages, the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) stated.
- The programme is being conducted in collaboration with **UNICEF** Hyderabad Field Office, it stated in a release.
- **NIRDPRs Communication Resource Unit (CRU)** and **UNICEF** are working closely with the governments of **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh** and **Karnataka** in preparedness and responses to contain the pandemic, the NIRDPR stated.
- The online training programme was initiated along the lines of a detailed Risk Communication Plan to build capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), Self-help Groups (SHG), National Service Scheme (NSS) officials, volunteers and Community Radio Stations (CRS) on the role they can play, in preventing the spread of COVID-19, in their groups and village communities.
- The Communication Resource Unit (CRU) of NIRDPR and UNICEF, Hyderabad field office developed and shared relevant materials such as Handouts, Posters, FAQs and Audio-visual documents with all trainees in order to be circulated in their respective rural communities.

#### **Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel launches the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India in New Delhi**

- **Union Minister for Culture (I/C) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel** launched the **National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India** in New Delhi.
- The National ICH List is an attempt to recognize the diversity of Indian culture embedded in its intangible heritage.
- It aims to raise awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage elements from different states of India at national and international level and ensure their protection. This initiative is also a part of the Vision 2024 of the Ministry of Culture.

Following UNESCO's 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, this list has been classified into five broad domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Performing arts;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- Traditional craftsmanship.
- The present items in the list have been collated from the projects sanctioned under the scheme for 'Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India' formulated by the Ministry of Culture in 2013. As of now the list has more than 100 elements, It also includes the 13 elements of India that have already been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Further information on how to contact M/o Culture for the same can be found on its website <https://www.indiaculture.nic.in/national-list-intangible-cultural-heritage-ich>
- The support provided by Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) in building this list. It would also like to thank the researchers under the 'Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India' whose work has contributed immensely in this list.

#### **Govt constitutes 6 Inter-Ministerial Central Teams to make on-spot assessment of COVID-19 situation**

- Union Government has constituted **six Inter-Ministerial Central Teams** to make on-spot assessment of **COVID-19 situation**, issue **necessary directions to State Authorities** for its **redressal** and submit their report to the Centre.
- The teams will focus on compliance and implementation of lockdown measures as per guidelines, supply of essential commodities, social distancing, preparedness of the health infrastructure, safety of health professionals and conditions of the relief camps for labour and poor people.
- Violations to lockdown measures have been reported, which pose a serious health hazard to public and risk for spread of COVID- 19. There have been incidents of violence on frontline healthcare professionals, complete violations of social distancing norms and movement of vehicles in urban areas.
- Home Ministry has urged States and Union Territories to ensure strict compliance and implementation of revised consolidated guidelines on lockdown measures without any dilution to fight COVID-19. In a letter to states, the Ministry observed that certain states are allowing activities not permitted under Home Ministry guidelines.

#### **Govt launches online data pool of critical human resource for combating and containing COVID-19**

- **Government** has launched **online data pool** of **critical human resource** for combating and containing COVID-19. Health Ministry stated, it has created an online data pool on [www.covidwarriors.gov.in](http://www.covidwarriors.gov.in) of doctors including nurses

and other health care professionals, volunteers from National Yuva Kendras, NCC, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and ex-Servicemen for use by the ground level administration at state, district or municipal levels.

- It contains state wise and district wise availability of the large pool of human resources from various groups along with contact details of the nodal officers.
- The Ministry stated that dashboard is available for use by various authorities to prepare **Crisis Management and Contingency Plans** based on the available manpower, in coordination with nodal officers for each group.
- This database can also be used to utilise the services of volunteers for enforcing social distancing at banks, ration shops, mandis and for providing help to elderly, divyang and orphanages.
- This will also help States and Union Territories to move human resources from one location to the other for their utilisation.

#### **Centre forms high-level task force to develop vaccines, drugs**

- The government announced setting up of a **new task force** to work on the development of vaccines and potential drugs as India continues to see rising number of covid-19 cases.
- The high-level task force will be headed by member **NITI Aayog professor Vinod Paul** and Principal Scientific Advisor to the government, **K Vijayraghavan**. It will work on various science frontiers to develop vaccines and drugs for the deadly virus.
- It will also have members from the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Ministry of Ayush**, department of science and technology, department of biotechnology and council of scientific and industrial research (**CSIR**).

#### **BRO constructs bridge in record time on a key road connecting strategic areas in AP**

- **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** constructed bridge over **Subansiri river** in **Arunachal Pradesh** in a record span of just 27 days.
- Chief Minister **Pema Khandu** inaugurated the bridge over video conferencing and opened it for public use. Amidst the nationwide lockdown, BRO undertook the developmental work for construction of the **Daporijo bridge** maintaining utmost precautions against COVID-19.
- The construction has been done keeping in view of the future Infrastructure based developmental requirements of Upper Subansiri district in the state.

#### **Fifteenth Finance Commission to assess implications of COVID-19 pandemic on GDP growth**

- The **Economic Advisory Council** of the **Fifteenth Finance Commission** will meet this month to discuss implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on GDP growth.
- The council members will meet on **23rd and 24th of this month** through online medium which will be presided over by Chairman of the Commission, **N. K. Singh**.
- The members would also be discussing on the possible assumptions for tax buoyancy and revenue in the current and next financial year.

#### **Govt sanctions Rs15000 cr investment for 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package'**

- The **Union Cabinet** gave its post facto approval for significant investments to the tune of **15 thousand crore rupees** for '**India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package**'.
- The funds sanctioned will be utilized in 3 Phases. Out of the total amount, seven thousand 774 crore rupees has been provisioned for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response and rest for medium-term support of one to four years to be provided under mission mode approach. In Phase- 1, the Health Ministry with the support of all the other line ministries has already undertaken several activities.

- Three thousand crore rupees has been released under the Package to States for strengthening of existing health facilities as COVID Dedicated Hospitals, Dedicated COVID Health Center and Dedicated COVID Care Centers. Orders for procurement of 13 lakhs diagnostic kits have been placed to augment COVID 19 testing. All health workers have been covered with insurance under the “**Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan** Package.
- The key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 in the country through the development of diagnostics and COVID-dedicatcd treatment facilities, centralized procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients.

#### **UNODC launches ‘Lockdown Learners’ series for students, teachers of India**

- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC)** has launched a ‘**Lockdown Learners’** series of online dialogues with students and educators in India on COVID-19 and its impact on Sustainable Development Goals, peace and rule of law
- Educational institutes have been shut down in India due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to stop the spread of covid-19. This has resulted to a halt in the academic session of 2020, which is motivating organisations to take steps like launching online platforms for students.
- The dialogues have been launched by the United Nations body under its flagship Education for Justice initiative.
- The Lockdown Learners series also provides a platform for students to receive mentorship and knowledge support through activity-based learning, and use their talent and skills to promote awareness and share their ideas and solutions to address some of these problems.

#### **Govt declares banking industry as a public utility service for six months till October 21**

- Government has declared **banking industry** as a public utility service for **six months till October 21** under the **provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act**.
- Bringing banking services under the provisions of this Act means that the banking sector would not see any strikes by employees or officers during the operation of the law starting from April 21.
- In a circular, Department of Financial Services stated the labour and employment ministry through a notification has declared "**banking industry as a public utility service**" for six months.
- The notification was issued by the labour ministry against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic which has significantly impacted economic activities.

#### **Nirmala Sitharaman appreciates New Development Bank’s 1 bn dollar emergency assistance to India to combat COVID-19 pandemic**

- **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** appreciated efforts of **New Development Bank** on fast tracking of financial assistance of about **five billion dollars** to **BRICS countries** including Emergency Assistance of **one billion dollar to India** to combat COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the 5th Annual Meeting of Board of Governors through video conference, Ms. Sitharaman also suggested that, assistance under this facility to be enhanced to 10 billion dollars.
- Ms Sitharaman also outlined various measures taken in India to respond to the COVID-19 including allocation of 15 thousand crore rupees for strengthening the healthcare system and announcement of a scheme of social support measures amounting to **25 billion dollars** to alleviate the hardship of the poor and the vulnerable.
- She also strongly encouraged NDB to take appropriate actions to join **G-20 forum** along with other Multilateral Development Bank and International Financial Institutions. Ms. Sitharaman urged NDB to follow innovative practices in supporting the BRICS nations for achieving their Sustainable Development Goals.

- The NDB was established by the BRICS countries -Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa in 2014. NDB has so far approved 14 Indian projects for an amount of 4,183 million dollars.
- The purpose of the Bank is to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging market economies and developing countries to complement the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.

#### India approves USD 1 million to Antigua as project outlay

- India has approved **USD 1 million** to **Antigua** as project outlay, with immediate assistance of **USD 1,50,000** for medical equipment to combat coronavirus crisis.
- India supplies medical aid across the world to fight COVID19. India approves US\$1 mn to Antigua as project outlay, with immediate assistance of US \$150k for medical equipment etc," India has sent medical supplies including hydroxychloroquine tablets to several countries.
- India announced that it will send **hydroxychloroquine** to 55 nations to fight COVID19 including **Kazakhstan**.
- Hydroxychloroquine has been deemed as an important medicine for the treatment of a patient suffering from coronavirus.

#### eGovFoundation launches COVID e-pass platform for movement of essential goods and service providers

- To simplify the process of issuing **e-passes** for **essential goods and service** providers during lockdown, **eGov foundation** has launched **COVID e-Pass system**.
- The platform is expected to reduce the operational burden of government officials and help in ensuring a seamless supply of essential goods and services during the lockdown.
- The COVID e-Pass system is a trust-based application where the state nodal officers must approve one-time registration requests from the companies along with setting the daily quota of passes for each company.
- The pass is delivered to the applicant in pdf and SMS with an instruction to carry a valid photo ID. State Nodal Officers will work with police authorities for verification and validation of the e-Pass during the commute.

#### NTPC Vindhyachal becomes India's largest power plant to achieve 100 per cent Plant Load Factor

- **NTPC Vindhyachal** has become the **largest power plant of the country** to achieve a plant load factor (PLF) of **100 per cent**. The 100 per cent PLF means that the power plant was run at its full capacity of 3760 MW for a certain period.
- This is a significant development because the average PLF of power plants across the country hovers at around 60 per cent.
- Prior to this, other NTPC power plants, such as the **Talcher Thermal plant** of 460 MW has also been run at 100 per cent PLF. But no plant with an installed capacity close to NTPC Vindhyachal has achieved this till now.
- An official statement stated that this 100 PLF was achieved on April 13, in the midst of the countrywide COVID-19 lockdowns.
- NTPC group's total installed capacity is 62110 MW. The group has 70 power stations i.e. 24 Coal, 7 combined cycle gas/liquid fuel, 1 Hydro, 13 Renewables along with 25 joint venture power stations.
- The second 660MW unit of India's first ultra-supercritical power station NTPC Kharagone also became commercial during the lockdown period.

#### Union Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Shri Narendra Singh Tomar issues guidelines regarding the SVAMITVA scheme

- Union Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Shri Narendra Singh Tomar issued guidelines regarding the **SVAMITVA** scheme, a new initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

- This scheme will help in streamlining planning and revenue collection in rural areas and ensuring clarity on property rights; the scheme will also enable creation of better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plans engaging Drone Surveying technology.
- Shri Narendra Singh Tomar also released a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) regarding e-Gram Swaraj.

#### Revision Points

Portfolio	Union Minister	Constituency
Ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions	Narendra Modi	Varanasi
Ministry of Defence	Rajnath Singh	Lucknow
Ministry of Home Affairs	Amit Shah	Gandhinagar
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways & Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium enterprises	Nitin Gadkari	Nagpur
Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers	DV Sadananda Gowda	Bangalore North
Ministry of Finance & Ministry of Corporate Affairs	Nirmala Sitharaman	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Consumer affairs, food and public distribution	Ram Vilas Paswan	NA
Ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Narendra Singh Tomar	Morena
Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of communications & Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	Ravi Shankar Prasad	Patna Sahib
Ministry of Food Processing Industries	Harsimrat Kaur Badal	Bathinda
Ministry of Social justice and empowerment	Thaawar Chand Gehlot	RS
Ministry of External Affairs	Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	RS (Gujarat)
Ministry of Human Resource Development	Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'	Haridwar
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	Arjun Munda	Khunti
Ministry of Women and child Development & Ministry of Textiles	Smriti Zubin Irani	Amethi
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,	Dr Harsh Vardhan	Chandni Chowk

Ministry of Science and Technology & Ministry of Earth Sciences		
Ministry of environment, forest and climate change & Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise	Prakash Javadekar	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Railways & Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Piyush Goyal	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Ministry of Steel	Dharmendra Pradhan	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Minority Affairs	Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of coal & Ministry of Mines	Pralhad Joshi	Dharwad
Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey	Chandauli
Ministry of Animal Husbandry, dairying and fisheries	Giriraj Singh	Begusarai

### Important International News

#### Secretary General appoints group as part of NATO reflection process

- Secretary General **Jens Stoltenberg** announced the appointment of a **group of experts** on to support his work in a reflection process to further strengthen NATO's political dimension. The group of five men and five women will be co-chaired by **Thomas de Maizière** and **Wess Mitchell**, and will report to the Secretary General
- It will offer recommendations to reinforce Alliance unity, increase political consultation and coordination between Allies, and strengthen NATO's political role.
- The composition of the group advising the Secretary General on the reflection process takes into account gender balance, relevant experience, and the geographic distribution of Allies. The group will engage with Allied capitals and the North Atlantic Council, NATO's decision making body, and other relevant stakeholders.
- The following people have been appointed to the group: Greta Bossenmaier (Canada), Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen (Denmark), Hubert Védrine (France), Thomas de Maizière (Germany), Marta Dassù (Italy), Herna Verhagen (The Netherlands), Anna Fotyga (Poland), Tacan Ildem (Turkey), John Bew (United Kingdom) and Wess Mitchell (United States).

#### Global economy could shrink by almost 1 per cent in 2020, say UN

- The **global economy** could shrink by up to **one per cent in 2020** due to the coronavirus pandemic, a reversal from the previous forecast of **2.5 per cent growth**, the United Nations (UN) stated, warning that it may contract even further if restrictions on the economic activities are extended without adequate fiscal responses.

- The analysis by the **UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)** stated the Covid-19 pandemic is disrupting global supply chains and international trade.
- The analysis noted that before the outbreak of the Covid-19, world output was expected to expand at a modest pace of 2.5 per cent in 2020, as reported in the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020.

#### **UNGA adopts resolution calling for global solidarity in fight against COVID-19**

- The **United Nations General Assembly** has unanimously adopted a resolution on COVID-19, calling for intensified international cooperation to defeat the pandemic.
- Co-sponsored by 188 nations including India, the resolution titled **Global solidarity** to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is first such document on the global pandemic to be adopted by the world organization.
- The resolution stated the General Assembly notes with great concern the threat to human health, safety and well-being caused by the disease. It highlighted the unprecedented effects of the pandemic, including the severe disruption to societies, economies, global travel and commerce, and the devastating impact on the livelihood of people.
- The resolution called for intensified international cooperation in exchanging information, scientific knowledge and best practices and applying guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization.

#### **UAE officially asks to postpone Expo 2020 Dubai, likely to be held in October 2021**

- The **United Arab Emirates** has officially requested to postpone the start of the **Expo 2020 Dubai** until October next year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the body that oversees the world fair stated.
- Dubai, the glitzy city-state which is part of the UAE, had hoped to attract some 25 million visits to the multi-billion-dollar, six-month event, which was scheduled to launch **October 20** this year.
- The government of the United Arab Emirates has formally requested the postponement of **World Expo 2020 Dubai**," the Paris-based Bureau International des Expositions stated in a statement.
- Following consultations with the BIE, participating countries and key stakeholders, the UAE has proposed **1 October 2021 - 31 March 2022** as the new opening dates of Expo 2020 Dubai.
- The UAE government also requested approval to continue using **Expo 2020 Dubai** as the event's official name.

#### **IMF to open USD 1 trillion war chest to aid fight against the coronavirus**

- More than 90 countries have sought emergency funding from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, according its MD Kristalina Georgieva. The 189-member-nation multilateral agency has indicated that it will put to use its **\$1 trillion war chest** to help countries cope up with **the ensuing crisis**.
- Stating that emerging markets and developing economies have been hit hard by Covid-19, Georgieva stated that about **\$90 billion investments** have already flowed out of these markets, far more than during the financial crisis. The IMF has begun disbursing funds to requesting countries, including Rwanda, with requests from two additional African nations to be reviewed, she added.
- **The IMF** and the **World Health Organisation** called for an emergency aid to strengthen health systems, pay doctors and nurses, and buy protective gear.

#### **UN Security Council to discuss Covid-19 pandemic in closed session**

- The **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** will hold a **closed session** to discuss the Covid-19 pandemic, the first time the powerful UN organ is holding a meeting on coronavirus that has killed more than 74,000 people and infected over 1.3 million globally.

- Council President for the month of April, the **Dominican Republic**, stated it has formally scheduled a **closed video-conferencing (VTC)** “regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the issues that fall under the UNSC mandate”.
- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will participate in the session as a briefer. It remains to be seen whether any press statement on the Covid-19 situation is issued after the meeting.
- The Dominican Republic assumed the rotating presidency of the 15-nation Council for the month of April, taking the baton from permanent and veto-wielding member **China**.

#### **SAARC Development Fund allocates USD 5 million to deal with COVID-19**

- The **SAARC Development Fund (SDF)** stated it has allocated **USD 5 million** (about Rs 38 crore) for COVID-19 projects in eight member countries as the virus pandemic threatens economic activities across the globe.
- This COVID-19 project shall be funded by SDF under its social window thematic areas, it stated in a statement.
- SDF's social window primarily funds projects on poverty alleviation, social development focusing on education, health, and human resource development, among others.
- The objective of the **USD 5 million** allocation is to provide fund support to the member states in their efforts and to protect the people of the SAARC member states by mitigating the financial losses and severe socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, SDF CEO Sunil Motiwal stated.
- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the eight members of the SAARC formation.

#### **IMF proposes to deploy its full 1 trillion US Dollar lending capacity to support countries**

- **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has proposed to deploy its **full 1 trillion US Dollar** lending capacity to support countries battling COVID-19 outbreak.
- Describing the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis like no other, International Monetary Fund head **Kristalina Georgieva** on, world is now in the worst recession since the **Great Depression**.
- Georgieva told reporters at the start of the first ever virtual annual spring meeting of IMF and the World Bank in Washington, about its plans to **double emergency financial assistance**.
- The IMF Board has already approved debt relief for 25 of its poorest members. IMF chief expressed satisfaction that during the G20 Finance ministers discussion, there was unanimous support for the Fund to raise more capacity for concessional funding poor countries.

#### **WHO launches interactive COVID-19 service on Facebook Messenger**

- The **World Health Organisation** has come up with an interactive method which uses **Facebook Messenger** to eradicate false information being spread about coronavirus.
- The WHO will be using the reach of Facebook Messenger to provide accurate information to users.
- The users will also be able to ask questions and get a quick response from the WHO's **'Health Alert'** service on Messenger.
- This service will be free to use. In many of the regions hit hardest by COVID-19, total messaging through Facebook's family of apps has increased by more than 50 per cent," Facebook stated in statement
- The WHO's **'Health Alert'** interactive service can be accessed through the WHO's official Facebook Page by selecting Send Message or through the dedicated Messenger link.

#### **Global trade likely to fall by 13-32% in 2020 amid Covid-19 outbreak: WTO**

- **Global trade** is expected to fall by **13-32 per cent** in 2020 as the **coronavirus disease (Covid-19)** pandemic disrupts economic activity and life around the world, the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** stated

- The current slump will prove to be biggest of a generation, bigger than the global financial crisis of 2008-09, WTO stated in its Annual Trade Statistics and Outlook Report.
- The report also pointed out that in 2019, **1.7 per cent** of world exports originated from India, while **2.5 per cent of imports** reached the country.
- The report also warned that estimates of the expected recovery in **2021** remain gravely uncertain, with outcomes depending significantly on the duration of the outbreak and the effectiveness of policy responses by nations. If the pessimistic scenario comes to fruition, it could be the most precipitous drop in global commerce since the Great Depression.

#### **African Development Bank Group unveils \$10 billion Response Facility to curb COVID-19**

- The **African Development Bank Group** announced the creation of the **COVID-19 Response Facility** to assist regional member countries in fighting the pandemic.
- The Facility is the latest measure taken by the Bank to respond to the pandemic and will be the institution's primary channel for its efforts to address the crisis. It provides up to **\$10 billion** to governments and the private sector.
- **Akinwumi Adesina**, President of the African Development Bank Group, stated the package took into account the fiscal challenges that many African countries are facing.
- The Facility entails **\$5.5 billion** for sovereign operations in African Development Bank countries, and **\$3.1 billion** for sovereign and regional operations for countries under the African Development Fund, the Bank Group's concessional arm that caters to fragile countries.
- An additional **\$1.35 billion** will be devoted to private sector operations.
- The Bank launched a record-breaking \$3 billion Fight COVID-19 Social Bond, the world's largest US dollar-denominated social bond ever on the international capital market. The Board of Directors also approved a \$2 million grant for the World Health Organization for its efforts on the continent.

#### **IMF grants immediate debt relief to 25 poor nations to help fight Covid-19**

- The **International Monetary Fund** announced it had approved **immediate debt relief** for **25 poor countries** to help them free up funds to fight the coronavirus pandemic.
- The IMF's revamped **Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT)** enables the IMF to deliver grants for debt relief benefitting eligible low-income countries in the wake of catastrophic natural disasters and major, fast-spreading public health emergencies.
- The CCRT can currently provide about **\$500 million** in grant-based debt service relief, according to Georgieva.
- On April 9, the IMF MD had stated that the pandemic inflicted an economic crisis unlike any in the past century and will require a massive response to ensure recovery. She stated the world needed to brace for **"the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression"**

#### **North Korea fires barrage of cruise missiles on eve of founder's birthday**

- **North Korea** fires barrage of **cruise missiles** on eve of founder's birthday The **"multiple projectiles"** fired from Munchon in eastern Kangwon province were believed to be **"surface-to-ship cruise missiles,"** the JCS stated in a statement.
- The missiles flew for approximately **150 kilometres (93 miles)** before splashing into the waters off the east coast.
- The launches come on the eve of the birthday of North Korea's founder **Kim Il Sung**.
- North Korea has carried out a series of short-range missile and other weapons tests amid stalled nuclear talks with the United States.
- Last month, it fired nine ballistic missiles in four rounds of tests, according to analysts.

### US approves sale of Harpoon missiles, torpedoes worth USD 155 million to India

- The Trump Administration notified the Congress of its determination to sell **Harpoon Block II** air launched missiles and **lightweight torpedoes** worth **USD155 million** to India.
- The sale of **10 AGM-84L Harpoon Block II** air launched missiles is estimated to cost **USD92 million**, while **16 MK 54 All Up Round Lightweight Torpedoes** and **three MK 54 Exercise Torpedoes** are estimated to cost **USD63 million**, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency stated in two separate notifications to the Congress.
- A determination in this regard was recently made by the US State Department following a request for these two military hardware made by the Indian Government, the Pentagon stated.
- The Harpoon missile system will be integrated into the P-8I aircraft to conduct anti-surface warfare missions in defense of critical sea lanes while enhancing inter-operability with the United States and other allied forces.

### Donald Trump halts World Health Organization funding over handling of coronavirus

- US President **Donald Trump** has announced that he has instructed his administration to stop US funding for the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, which he accused of grossly mismanaging and covering-up the spread of the novel coronavirus.
- Trump noted that the United States contributes to the WHO **400-500 million dollars** annually. President Trump stated, had the WHO done its job to get medical experts into China to objectively assess the situation on the ground and to call out China's lack of transparency, the outbreak could have been contained at its source with very little death.
- The US President stated WHO's reliance on initially false data from China regarding the novel coronavirus may have caused a 20-fold increase in cases worldwide. He further added that the United States will continue to engage with the WHO to see if the organization can implement meaningful reforms.

### South Korea holds parliamentary election under strict safety measures amid Covid-19 pandemic

- **South Koreans** began going to the polls to elect members of parliament, wearing masks and plastic gloves as part of strict safety measures in one of the **first national elections** held amid the coronavirus pandemic.
- About 14,000 polling stations were open at 6 AM (local time) around the country after disinfection, and voters were required to wear a mask and have a temperature check upon arrival. Anyone whose temperature was higher than 37.5 Celsius was led to a special booth.
- All voters must use hand sanitizer and plastic gloves when casting ballots and maintain 1 metre distance between each other.
- Globally, South Korea was one of the first countries to hold a national election since the coronavirus epidemic began, while many others postponed votes.
- The election campaign has taken on a different look, with candidates wearing masks and bumping fists instead of pressing the flesh and mass rallies.

### UN releases \$2.5 million to help cyclone-ravaged Vanuatu

- The **United Nations** released **\$2.5 million** from its emergency humanitarian fund to help thousands of people in the **South Pacific island** nation of **Vanuatu** affected by **Cyclone Harold** and offered support to other hard-hit countries.
- The cyclone made landfall on the largest island in Vanuatu, Espiritu Santo, on April 6 before hitting the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga. The U.N. cited media reports saying the storm left more than two dozen people dead, and destroyed homes, buildings and crops in the four countries.

- In Vanuatu, the U.N. humanitarian office stated, Initial assessments suggest as much as 90 per cent of the population in Sanma, the most affected province lost their homes, and more than half of all schools and almost a quarter of health centers were damaged.
- It stated crops have been destroyed and many communities are now cut off from help because of flooding and the destruction of roads.

#### **IMF approves over USD 1.3 billion emergency financing to Pakistan**

- **The International Monetary Fund (IMF)** approved **USD 1.3 billion** in emergency financing to Pakistan to address the economic impact of the COVID-19 shock.
- The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a purchase of Pakistan under the **Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI)** equivalent to **SDR 1,015.5 million** (US\$ 1.386 billion, 50 percent of quota) to meet the urgent balance of payment needs stemming from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, IMF stated.

#### **China earmarks \$10 million from its ADB Trust Fund to address COVID-19 challenges in developing Asia**

- The **Government of the People's Republic China (PRC)** has earmarked a total amount of **\$10 million** in its Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund to support the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** in assisting its developing member countries (DMCs) to address their novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) challenges.
- The funds will provide support to a broad range of operations, including not only the purchase of medical supplies and equipment but also health sector reforms and development, as well as capacity building, training, and knowledge sharing.
- Some **\$8 million** was added to the **\$2 million** approved by the PRC government on 8 April to help in the procurement of needed medical supplies as well as in capacity building for medical staff in DMCs, and development and dissemination of regionwide risk communication materials to address public fears over the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Facebook launches third party fact checking in Bangladesh**

- **Facebook** announced the launch of its **third party fact checking** system in **Bangladesh** to discourage the spread of fake news in the country. Facebook in partnership with **Boom Fact check** will review and rate the stories, including photos and videos.
- When third party fact-checkers rate a post as false or fake, it will appear less or at the bottom of news feed. This will reduce the spread of the post.
- IBoom is an Indian fact checking website which is available in English, Hindi and Bengali.
- Facebook started its fact-checking programme in 2016 and now it covers 60 partners in 50 languages.

#### **China begins testing of digital currency**

- **China's central bank** has started testing its **official digital currency**, pressing ahead with its plan to roll out a virtual money payment system, days after Facebook-backed Libra scaled back its ambitions to become a global currency.
- The Digital Currency Research Institute of the People's Bank of China (PBC) stated that the research and development work of China's official digital currency, dubbed as **DC/EP**, is proceeding steadily, and the internal pilot tests are carried out in four cities and will be carried out in scenarios of the 2022 Winter Olympics Games in Beijing.
- China's official digital currency is undergoing testing and has not been officially released.
- Insiders stated the trial run will be piloted within a small range of banks and end users, and spread to a wider range with an improved technology and system, the Global Times reported.

- More banks will continue to participate in the test of the DC/EP, in a bid to improve the technology, security and stability of the payment tool, Chen Bo, director of the Finance Research Centre at the Institute of Finance and Economics at the Central University of Finance and Economics told the daily.
- **The Agricultural Bank of China**, one of the country's big four state-owned banks, has tested the **DC/EP (digital currency/electronic payment)** in four cities in an app launched.

#### **Pakistan to host SAARC virtual conference on COVID-19**

- **Pakistan** will host a virtual conference of Ministers and senior officials from **8-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** to discuss a **common strategy against the COVID-19** pandemic in the region.
- The SAARC conference was proposed by Pakistan after the regional Ministers and representatives participated in a similar virtual summit on March 15 which was initiated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

#### **Lebanon legalises marijuana cultivation for medicinal use**

- The **Lebanese Parliament** legalised medicinal use of **cannabis** to bolster the export that can help revive the crippling economy that is in dire need of foreign currency.
- Although **marijuana** is illegal in Lebanon, cannabis has long been farmed openly in the fertile Bekaa Valley.
- The idea of legalising cannabis cultivation with the aim of producing high value-added medicinal products for export was explored in a report by consultancy firm McKinsey commissioned by Lebanon in 2018.
- The decision, which makes **Lebanon** the first Arab country to legalise marijuana growing, offers economic incentives for the debt-ridden state.
- It makes the state the sole proprietor for trading cannabis, which has been grown illicitly for decades in Bekaa, in the east of the country.

#### **WHO launches 'landmark' collaboration to develop COVID-19 drug, vaccine**

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** stated it would announce a "**landmark collaboration**" to speed development of safe, effective drugs, tests and vaccines to prevent, diagnose and treat COVID-19.
- The Geneva-based agency, in a brief statement stated the initiative with partners aims to make technologies against the disease caused by the novel coronavirus "**accessible to everyone who needs them, worldwide**", but gave no details.
- The **GAVI vaccine alliance**, **Gates Foundation** and **Global Fund** are among traditional large donors to the U.N. agency, in addition to its 194 member states.
- The initiative is expected to include a stockpile for use in poor countries, such as the WHO currently has for influenza vaccines should a flu virus evolve into a pandemic.

#### **Australia launches COVID-19 tracking app**

- **Australia** has launched its **coronavirus tracing app** named **COVIDSafe** despite drawing criticism for its approach to privacy.
- The voluntary software is based on **Singapore's TraceTogether** and it will use a mix of **Bluetooth** and stored **contact data** on both the app and servers to let people know if they have been in close contact with people who have tested positive for COVID-19.
- The Australian government has also promised that the COVID-19 tracking app will not collect locations and will only share data with health officials after an infected person offers consent. The government has also vowed to delete information on its end when the pandemic is over.

- Applications like **COVIDSafe** may prove vital in order to end lockdowns in countries as it will it easier to track the spread of the coronavirus.

#### **Facebook rolls out new group calling feature- Messenger rooms**

- **Facebook** announced its **new video conferencing feature, Messenger Rooms**. Messenger rooms are joinable group video calls that can soon accommodate up to 50 people in a single call.
- Introducing Messenger Rooms, group video links that allow you to drop in and spend quality time with friends, family and people who share your interests, Facebook tweeted from its official account.
- The social media giant's attempt to one-up Zoom, Messenger rooms lets users create a room from Messenger or Facebook and invite other users to join irrespective of them having a Facebook account.
- Users can start a Messenger room and share it directly on their News Feed, Groups and Events, so "it's easy for people to drop by." The feature sounds much like a group chat version of a Facebook or Instagram Live.
- The social media giant is leveraging its increased usage to roll out better video calling features. It also outlined certain privacy guidelines that the app will follow with its security features.
- The user who creates the room can control who can join, who sees the room, and if the room is locked or unlocked to new guests. The call can begin only when the user who has created the room is present on the call and the creator can remove guests at any time. Users can also report a room name or submit feedback about a room if they believe it violates Facebook's Community Standards.

#### **India extends USD 150 million foreign currency swap support to Maldives**

- India extended a **USD 150 million foreign currency swap** support to the **Maldives** to help the strategically important Indian Ocean island nation mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The swap facility was extended under **USD 400 million currency swap arrangement** signed between India and the Maldives in July last year.
- The currency swap facility is part of the **USD 1.4 billion economic package** announced by India for the Maldives during the state visit of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in December 2018.
- India stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the Maldives in tackling the global COVID-19 pandemic and providing financial stability. India is also considering extending the validity of the currency swap facility by one year.

#### **US provides additional \$ 3 million to India to fight Covid-19**

- The US will provide an additional **\$3 million** to India through the **US Agency for International Development (USTATED)** to support its efforts to fight the spread of Covid-19.
- This increases the total assistance provided by the USTATED to India for supporting its efforts against the virus to **\$ 5.9 million**.
- USTATED is providing these funds, in coordination with the Indian government, to the **Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity (PAHAL) project**, a financing platform of IPE Global.
- Through the PAHAL project, the USTATED will support the National Health Authority to establish a financing facility that can mobilise resources from the private sector to assist over 20,000 health facilities enrolled under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), India's health insurance scheme for the poor.

### Revision Points

Country	Capital	Currency	Head
Spain	Madrid	Euro	Pedro Sanchez
Maldives	Male	Rufiyaa	Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
France	Paris	Euro	Emmanuel Macron
Bangladesh	Dhaka	Taka	Abdul Hamid
Germany	Berlin	Euro	Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Iraq	Baghdad	Dinar	Barham Salih
United Kingdom	London	Pound Sterling	Boris Johnson
Bahrain	Manama	Dinar	Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
UAE	Abu Dhabi	Dirham	Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Sri Lanka	Colombo	Rupee	Gotabaya Rajapaksa
Norway	Oslo	Krone	Erna Solberg
Myanmar	Naypyitaw	Kyat	Win Myint
Thailand	Bangkok	Baht	Prayut Chan-o-cha
USA	Washington D.C	Dollar	Donald Trump
Nepal	Kathmandu	Rupee	Bidhya Devi Bhandari
Iran	Tehran	Rial	Hassan Rouhani
North Korea	Pyongyang	Won	Kim Jae-ryong
Lebanon	Beirut	Pound	Hassan Diab
Nepal	Kathmandu	Rupee	Bidhya Devi Bhandari
South Africa	Cape Town	Rand	Cyril Ramaphosa
Israel	Jerusalem	Shekel	Benjamin Netanyahu
Afghanistan	Kabul	Afghani	Ashraf Ghani
Pakistan	Islamabad	Rupee	Arif Alvi
Vanuatu	Port Vila	Vatu	Charlot Salwai
South Korea	Seoul	Won	Moon Jae-in
France	Paris	CFA Franc	Edouard Philippe
Qatar	Doha	Riyal	Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani
Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	Riyal	Mohammed Bin Salman
China	Beijing	Renminbi	Xi Jinping
Japan	Tokyo	Yen	Shinzo Abe
Turkey	Ankara	Lira	Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Australia	Canberra	Dollar	Scott Morrison
Denmark	Copenhagen	Krone	Mette Frederiksen
The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Euro	Mark Rutte
Poland	Warsaw	Zloty	Andrzej Duda

### Important Appointments

### National Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor
Aalok Kumar	President and Chief Executive Officer of NEC Technologies	
Takayuki Inaba	Executive Chairman of NEC Technologies	
D. Lakshminarayanan	Managing Director, Sundaram Finance	Srinivas Acharya
Rajesh Oswal	Permanent Judge of the common High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh	
Prakash Kumar	Acting President of NCLT	MM Kumar
Madhabi Puri Buch	Whole Time Member, SEBI	
Pravin Rao (COO-Infosys)	Chairman, Nasscom	Keshav Muruges
Rekha Menon (Chairman-Accenture)	Vice Chairman, Nasscom	
Anurag Srivastava	Spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs	Raveesh Kumar
Shiva Kirti Singh	Chairperson, Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal	
Parag Raja	MD & CEO, Bharti AXA Life Insurance	Vikas Seth
Anamika Roy Rashtrowar	MD and CEO of IFFCO Tokio General Insurance	Warendra Sinha
Raj Vikash Verma	Part-time Chairman, AU Small Finance Bank	
Sanjay Agarwal	MD & CEO, AU Small Finance Bank	
Mahabaleshwara M S	MD & CEO, Karnataka Bank	
P Jayarama Bhat	Non-Executive Chairman (Part-time), Karnataka Bank	
Packirisamy (MD & CEO, Andhra Bank) and	Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the Union Bank of India	
Mrutyunjay Mahapatra (MD & CEO, Syndicate	Officer on Special Duty in the Canara Bank	

Bank)		
Vineet Arora	MD & CEO, Paytm General Insurance Ltd	
Ajay Mahajan	MD & CEO, CARE Ratings	Rajesh Mokashi
Rohit Sharma	Brand Ambassador of 'CricKingdom'	
Viswanathan Anand	Ambassador of WWF India for Environment	
PK Purwar (Chairman & MD, BSNL)	Additional charge of MTNL	
Justice Dipankar Datta	Chief justice of Bombay high court	Justice BP Dharmadhikari
Justice Biswanath Somadder	Chief justice of Meghalaya high court	Justice Mohammad Rafiq
Justice Mohammad Rafiq	Chief Justice of Odisha High Court	
Kapil Dev Tripathi	Secretary to President Ram Nath Kovind	Sanjay Kothari
N Kamakodi	MD & CEO, City Union Bank	
David Li	CEO, Huawei India	Jay Chen
Rakesh Sarma	President, IMMA	
PV Sindhu	Ambassador for BWF's 'I am Badminton'	
Sanjay Kothari	Chief Vigilance Commissioner	
Ravi Mittal (I & B Secretary)	Sports Secretary	
Anita Karwal (CBSE Chairman)	Secretary School Education and Literacy	
Preeti Sudan	Health Secretary	
Tarun Kapoor	Secretary in Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas	
Tarun Bajaj	Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs	
Amit Khare	Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting	
Madhavan Menon	Part-time Chairman, Catholic Syrian Bank	
Shiv Das Meena	Chairman & MD, Housing and Urban Development Corporation	
Neeraj Vyas	Interin MD & CEO, PNB Housing Finance	Sanjaya Gupta
Suresh N Patel (Former Andhra Bank Chief)	Central Vigilance Commissioner	T M Bhasin
Rajiv Kumar (Former Finance Secretary)	Chairperson, Public Enterprises Selection Board	Kapil Dev Tripathi

T.S. Tirumurti	India's next Ambassador to UN	Sayyad Akbaruddin
Deepak Mittal	India's Ambassador to Qatar, Bahrain	

### International Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor
Guillaume Cartier	Senior vice president & Chairman, Nissan Motors, Africa- Middle East and India	
Lisa Nandy	UK shadow foreign secretary	
Dedar Singh Gill	Judge of the High Court	
Maha Prasad Adhikari	Governor, Nepal Rastra Bank	
Ro Khanna	Member, White House coronavirus advisory council	
Sudarsanam Babu	USA's top science board	
Manisha Singh	US Envoy to the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development	
J Arun Kumar	USA Men's Head Coach	James Pamment
Joe Biden	Elected Ohio's Presidential Primary	

### Resignation/Retirement

Name of the Person	Designation
Pravin Jadhav	CEO, Paytm Money
Tamas Ajan	President, International Weightlifting Federation

### IMF Ropes In Raghuram Rajan, 11 Others To External Advisory Group

- The **International Monetary Fund**, appointed **former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Raghuram Rajan and 11 others** to its external **advisory group** to provide perspectives from around the globe on policy issues, including **financial help aimed at curbing the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Other members of the group are Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Senior Minister of Singapore and Chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore; Kristin Forbes, Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister of Australia; Lord Mark Malloch Brown, former UN deputy secretary-general among others.
- Rajan has earlier served as chief economist at IMF from 2003 to 2007.57-year old Rajan, who served as RBI Governor till September 2016, is currently working as a professor at the University of Chicago.

### Bureaucratic reshuffle in govt, Tarun Bajaj appointed DEA Secretary

- Rural Development Secretary **Rajesh Bhushan** has been appointed as the **Officer on Special Duty (OSD)** in the **Health and Family Welfare Department** in the rank of secretary.
- **Nagendra Nath Sinha** will be the new Secretary of **Rural Development Department** in place of Bhushan.
- Information and Broadcasting Secretary **Ravi Mittal** has been moved out as Secretary, **Department of Sports**.

- Consumer Affairs Secretary **Pawan Kumar Agarwal** has been appointed as **Special Secretary (Logistics)** in the **Department of Commerce**.
- **Leena Nandan**, the Special Secretary in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will be the **Consumer Affairs Secretary** in place of Agarwal.
- Food and Public Distribution **Secretary Ravi Kant** has been moved out as the Secretary, **Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare**.
- Senior bureaucrat **Sudhanshu Panday** will be the **Food and Public Distribution** Secretary in place of Kant.
- Road Transport and Highways Secretary **Sanjeev Ranjan** has been moved out as the **Shipping Secretary**.
- **Aramane Giridhar**, the Additional Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat will be the Secretary in the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** in place of Ranjan.
- **Rameshwar Prasad Gupta** has been appointed as the Secretary in the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
- **Pradip Kumar Tripathi**, the Special Secretary and Establishment Officer in the Department of Personnel and Training, will be the Secretary, **the Ministry of Steel**.
- **Tarun Kapoor**, the Vice Chairman of Delhi Development Authority (DDA), has been appointed as the Secretary of the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.
- **Rajesh Verma**, Special Secretary in the Department of Agriculture will be the new Secretary, **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**.
- **Anand Kumar**, a 1984-batch IAS officer of Kerala cadre, will be new **Culture Secretary**.
- **Ram Mohan Mishra** has been appointed as the Secretary in the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes**.
- **Rajesh Kumar Chaturvedi** who is currently Special Secretary & Financial Advisor in the Culture Ministry, will now be the Secretary in the **Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals**.
- **Shri Ajay Tirkey**, will be the Secretary in the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, while **Niten Chandra** has been appointed as the Additional Secretary, Central Agency Section, **Department of Legal Affairs**

**Note:**

**Brand Ambassadors in Recent News**

- **Mobile Premier League (MPL)** has brought on actress **Tamannaah Bhatia** of Baahubali to endorse their gaming platform. Recently, MPL also renewed its association with Indian Cricket Captain **Virat Kohli** for another year.
- **Sara Ali Khan** roped in as **JBL** brand ambassador.
- **Shafali Verma**, who has starred in India's run to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020 final, has been named brand ambassador of **Pepsi** ahead of International Women's Day (March 8).
- **Realme** appointed **Salman Khan** as its brand ambassador.
- **Shardul Thakur** appointed as the brand ambassador of **Tata Power**
- **Hair colour brand Indica** roped in **Akshay Kumar and Ileana D' Cruz** as brand ambassadors
- **Yashika of Ballabgarh** announced brand ambassador for '**Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao**'
- Badminton world champion **P.V. Sindhu** has been appointed the brand ambassador for **Andhra Pradesh** government's anti-graft helpline.
- **IDFC FIRST Bank** announced the signing of India's most iconic personality, Mr. **Amitabh Bachchan**, as its first ever brand ambassador.
- **Sourav Ganguly** invited by IOA to be Indian team's Goodwill Ambassador at Tokyo Olympics

### Important Awards and Honours

Winner	Prize	Awarded By/Theme/Purpose
Naveen Patnaik	Hero to Animals Award	The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals India
Tata Power	Edison Award for Social innovation	Club Enerji #Switchoff2SwitchOn
Abdelouahab Aissaoui (Algeria) (Book - The Spartan Court)	13th International Prize for Arabic Fiction	UK's Booker Prize Foundation
UST Global('Empowering Employees with AI')	Most Innovative AI Application Award for Societal Impact	Microsoft
Adam Higginbotham	William E. Colby Award	Awarded for the book 'Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster'

#### CLW sets World Record by producing 431 Locomotives in FY 2019-20

- Despite COVID-19 restrictions coming in force on 21 March 2020 across the country, the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) has created another record in making the highest number of locomotives. In the financial year 2019-20, the CLW produced **a total of 431 locomotives**. The locomotive factory, located in **Asansol, West Bengal**, surpassed its own record of manufacturing a number of 402 locomotives in the financial year 2018-19, which has been recognized by Limca Book of Records as World Record.
- The production of locomotives by CLW has witnessed a jump of 75 per cent over the last six years from 250 locomotives in 2014-15 to 431 locomotives in 2019-20, under the 'Make in India' initiative, states Indian Railways.
- According to the ministry, the CLW produced 250 electric locomotives in the financial year 2014-15, 280 locomotives in the financial year 2015-16, 292 locomotives in the financial year 2016-17, 350 locomotives in the financial year 2017-18, 402 locomotives in the financial year 2018-19.

#### Indian NGO ARMMAN wins prestigious USD 1.5 million Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship

- **ARMMAN**, an India-based non-profit organization, has been awarded the **Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship 2020** for its exceptional work in the maternal and child health space in India.
- The Skoll Awards are presented annually to select organizations with the ability to drive sustained change on the world's most pressing problems and carries a monetary investment of USD 1.5 million, along with other support.
- ARMMAN is one of five organisations to win this year, and the only one from Asia and Africa, selected from an initial shortlist of 700 organizations.
- ARMMAN works towards empowering mothers and enabling healthy children in India.

- **MoHFW, Gol** has partnered with **ARMMAN** for implementation of **Kilkari and Mobile Academy** initiatives for strengthening Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) services, especially in rural areas.

**Each of the 020 Awardees leads an organization that shows great promise of outsized impact:**

- ARMMAN: Dr. Aparna Hegde
- Center for Tech and Civic Life: Tiana Epps-Johnson, Donny Bridges, and Whitney May
- Glasswing International: Celina de Sola and Ken Baker
- The International Council on Clean Transportation: Drew Kodjak
- Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: Drew Sullivan and Paul Radu

**Four Indian-Americans awarded 2020 Guggenheim fellowships**

- **Four Indian-Americans** have been awarded with a prestigious **US fellowship** for their accomplishments and “exceptional promise”.
- **Pradeep Sharma**, mechanical engineer at the University of Houston, **Kavita Ramanan**, professor of Applied Mathematics at Brown University, **Dilip Da Cunha**, architect, planner and teacher at Harvard University and Columbia University, and **Mukul Sharma**, professor of Earth Sciences at Dartmouth College, have been awarded the **2020 Guggenheim fellowships**.
- This year’s fellowships recognise 173 people, selected from an initial field of 3,000.
- The size of grant varies and is adjusted to the needs of fellows, considering their other resources and the purpose and scope of their plans. The average grant in the 2008 Canada and United States competition was approximately **USD 43,200**.
- The Guggenheim Foundation has granted more than USD 375 million in fellowships to over 18,000 individuals since the fellowships began in 1925. Recipients include Nobel laureates, Fields Medalists, poets laureate, members of the national academies and winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Bancroft Prize, Turing Award and National Book Awards, among other honours.

**Important MOU's**

**Smart Cities partner with medical practitioners to provide online consultation**

- **Smart Cities** are joining hands with **medical practitioners** (certified doctors and health experts) to provide **online medical consultation** facilities to citizens.
- The guidelines issued by **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** in collaboration with **NITI Aayog** and **Indian Medical Council**, allow remote delivery of medical services during the lockdown period.
- These guidelines allow doctors to write prescriptions based on telephonic, textual or video conversations — chat, images, messaging, emails, fax and others. Citizens can, therefore, consult certified medical practitioners without the need to go out of their houses, reducing the risk of Covid-19 spread.
- **In Bhopal, the integrated command and control centre (ICCC)** is being used as a helpline and tele-counselling centre for citizens. The station operators at ICCC are trained to attend calls. Medical officers are stationed at ICCC in different shifts to assist during any situation.
- Meanwhile, **in Kanpur, telemedicine** is being offered through **video-conferencing facility** launched by the city administration. Citizens have been requested to make video calls on the number 8429525801 to avail of the facility.

**TRIFED to launch a digital campaign in collaboration with UNICEF for self help groups to ensure Tribal Gatherers carry on their work safely**

- TRIFED has collaborated with UNICEF for developing a digital communication strategy for promoting a digital campaign for Self Help Groups (SHGs) involved in this work, highlighting the importance of Social Distancing.
- UNICEF would provide the necessary support to be circulated to the SHG centers in the form of Digital Multimedia content, Webinars for Virtual trainings (basic orientation on COVID response, key preventive behaviours), Social Media campaigns (on social distancing, home quarantine, etc.) and Vanya Radio.
- Additionally, TRIFED has reached out to the Art of Living Foundation's #StandWithHumanity Initiative with a Stand With Tribal Families component in providing much needed food and ration for survival of the tribal community.
- It is aimed to reach more than 18,000 participants and would cover tribal regions across all the 27 States.

#### Tech Mahindra, IBM tie up to set up innovation centres

- Tech Mahindra has decided to set up innovation centres in collaboration with IBM, in order to provide boost to digital transformation and encourage adoption of more cloud-based technologies among its global customers.
- The centres will showcase IBM's digital transformation solutions built with Cloud Paks running on Red Hat OpenShift, which could come handy for solving complex business problems for various industries, including healthcare, telecommunication, financial services, manufacturing, insurance and retail.
- The company plans to open the first such innovation centre in Bengaluru in 2020 and more such centres will be set up across North America and UK later this year.
- The collaboration with IBM will help us accelerate the development of cloud-based applications for our customers and build multi-cloud data management solutions on the industry-leading hybrid platform.
- The commitment to building Innovation Centers aligns with our TechMNxt charter, an initiative that leverages emerging technology to solve real-world business problems for customers.

#### MyGov, VMate collaborates to disperse information on Covid-19

- Short video app VMate has now joined hands with the Government's citizen engagement platform MyGov to aid the Centre's efforts in combating the menace of the coronavirus pandemic.
- An official profile of the entity, named MyGovIndia, has been launched on VMate to cater to official information related to the novel virus outbreak and the efforts being made on all fronts to curb its impact.
- The MyGov citizen engagement platform was launched by the Indian government shortly after PM Modi came to power in 2014.
- The company mentioned that the profile is also equipped to stream live speeches and announcements.
- The 64th edition of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio program 'Mann Ki Baat' was streamed live through the MyGovIndia profile on VMate.
- 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 in the combined fight against Covid-19.
- The app also contains information regarding risks, best practices, and relevant advisories about the virus outbreak.
- Before the launch of the MyGovIndia profile, VMate had launched a profile titled 'Myth Buster', which furnished WHO-sourced information related to the pandemic in an interactive and animated format.

#### Maruti joins hands with AgVA Healthcare to supply 10,000 ventilators by May-end

- India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL) will complete its first order of 10,000 ventilators in collaboration with AgVA Healthcare, an existing approved manufacturer of ventilators, to the Central government by the end of May.

- It has now reached 250-300 ventilators a day. By the end of this month, planning to hit 400. This means 10,000 ventilators in a month. They will complete the supply of **10,000 ventilators by the end of May**.
- Masks are being produced by another joint venture company. They have already supplied two lakh masks to Haryana and one lakh to Gujarat

### Revision Points

Organizations	Purpose
Smart Cities & Medical Practitioners	Online Medical consultation
TRIFED & UNICEF	Promoting digital campaigns for SHGs
Tech Mahindra & IBM	Setting up of Innovation centres
MyGov & VMate	Dispersing information on Covid-19
Maruti Suzuki & AgVA Healthcare	Supplying of 10000 ventilators

### Important Summit & Conference

#### G20 finance ministers to hold virtual talks on coronavirus crisis

- **Finance ministers** and **central bankers of the Group of 20 major economies** will hold a second round of virtual talks to push ahead the coronavirus response.
- They were injecting **\$5 trillion** into the global economy to head off forecasts of a deep recession.
- US President **Donald Trump** and Russian President **Vladimir Putin** joined the emergency summit chaired by Saudi Arabia's King Salman, who called for coordinated action while **facing pressure to end an oil price war between Riyadh and Moscow**
- G20 trade and investment ministers also held an extraordinary meeting, as they assess the impact of the crisis on global trade. This was attended by **Piyush Goyal**.

#### United Nation's COP 26 climate change summit postponed till next year

- **United Nation's COP 26 climate change** summit due to take place in the Scottish city of **Glasgow** in November has been **postponed** due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- British government rescheduled conference in **2021** would be announced later.
- Some 30,000 people, including 200 world leaders, had been due to attend the 10-day conference for crucial talks to halt rising global temperatures.
- Global CO2 emissions needed to drop 45 per cent by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050, to limit temperature rise to the safe cap of 1.5 degrees Celsius set as a goal in the Paris accord.

#### Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan participates in G20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' virtual meeting

- **Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan** participated in the **G20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' virtual Meeting**.
- The meeting was chaired by **Saudi Arabia Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz**. The meeting was attended by **Energy Ministers of G20 countries, guest countries** and heads of international organizations including **OPEC, IEA and IEF**.
- The G20 Energy Ministers' focused on ways and means to ensure stable energy markets, which are affected due to demand reduction as result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing surplus production -related matters.
- Under the aegis of the Ujjwala scheme, to provide 80.3 million poor families free LPG cylinders, as part of a 23 billion dollars relief package.

#### ASEAN holds special summit on response to COVID-19 pandemic

- The **Special Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit**, on the COVID-19 Response, in videoconferencing format, to affirm their commitment to combating the global pandemic, ensuring peaceful life of people and sustainable development of countries in the region.
- In his capacity as ASEAN Chair 2020, Vietnamese Prime Minister, **Nguyen Xuan Phuc**, chaired the virtual summit, which was attended by the heads of state or government of the 10 ASEAN members, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, and the ASEAN secretary-general.
- The leaders are expected to focus their discussions on containing and preventing the spread of COVID-19, supporting people in the countries hit by the disease, including providing consular assistance to ASEAN citizens living, working and studying in other ASEAN nations or a third country, and minimising socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic.
- They are also expected to adopt a joint statement on COVID-19 response, reaffirming their commitment and determination in eliminating the pandemic's risks, which threaten people's lives and socioeconomic stabilisation of the nations.
- The virtual Special ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea (ASEAN Plus Three) Summit on COVID-19 Response will be held, touching upon measures to respond to and repel the global pandemic.

#### 44th Session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee postponed

- The **44th session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO** was scheduled to be held the city of **Fuzhou, Fujian province, China June 29-July 9, 2020**.
- In light of recent developments in the **world related to pandemic COVID-19**, UNESCO decided that the event will be postponed to a later date. Consultations are currently under way to determine the exact dates of the session.
- The event is notable for its adoption of new world heritage sites as well as the potential for delisting sites that are not fulfilling their commitments.

#### Shri Narendra Singh Tomar participates in the G-20 Extraordinary Agriculture Ministers Meeting through Video Conferencing

- Union Agriculture Minister **Shri Narendra Singh Tomar** participated in an Extraordinary virtual meeting of G-20 Agriculture Ministers to address the issue of COVID-19 impacts on **food security, safety and nutrition**.
- The **G-20 Agriculture Ministers virtual meeting** was organized through video conferencing by the **Saudi Presidency** to deliberate on the ways and means of ensuring continuity of food supply value chain including livelihood of farmers. It was attended by **Agriculture Ministers of all G-20 members**, some guest countries and International organizations.
- The G-20 nations resolved to have international cooperation in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic, to avoid food wastages and losses, maintain the continuity of food supply value chain across borders.

#### Revision Points

Conference/Summits	Venue	Chaired By
UN's COP 26 Climate Change Summit (Postponed)	Glasgow	
G 20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' Meeting		<b>Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz</b>
<b>Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit</b>		Vietnamese Prime Minister, <b>Nguyen Xuan Phuc</b>

44th session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO	Fuzhou, China
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### Important Defence News

Exercise	Conducted by	Others
Pitch Black 2020	Australia	Scheduled in 2022

#### Operation Sanjeevani: IAF airlifts medical and hospital consumables for the Maldives

- India has supplied **6.2 tonnes of essential medicines** to **Maldives** as assistance in fight against COVID 19 under '**Operation Sanjeevani**'. The medicines were procured from various cities and delivered by an Hercules aircraft of Indian Air Force.
- India has also supplied essential food grains and edibles despite logistical challenges in wake of lockdown. The neighboring country is mostly dependent on imports from India for such supplies.

#### Army Medical Corps celebrates its 256th Raising Day

- The **Army Medical Corps (AMC)** on **April 3<sup>rd</sup>** celebrated its 256th Raising Day. It was raised based on the Royal Medical Corps.
- The 256th Raising Day was held with the motto '**Survey Santu Nirmaya**', meaning '**Let all humans be free from disease and disability**'.
- The AMC has excellence centres across the country with state-of-the-art equipment providing quality patient care.
- In the ongoing coronavirus crisis, the Army Medical Corps is actively involved and has established screening, isolation and treatment facilities for Armed Forces personnel.

#### INS Dega at Eastern Naval Command ensures joint-user airfield at Vizag remains open during lockdown

- INS Dega** of **Eastern Naval Command (ENC)** ensured that the **joint-user airfield at Visakhapatnam** remains open round-the-clock.
- The manning of the airfield has been modified to ensure that all requisite safety services and airfield facilities continue to be available.
- This ensured that all special flights, as well as the cargo flight of SpiceJet continued its operations unhindered.
- So far, 15 sorties of the cargo flight have operated since the lockdown has been enforced.
- Further, the Indian Navy continued to maintain its operational vigil carrying out regular maritime surveillance missions by day and night.
- The **Dornier squadron** of the **ENC, INAS 311**, operating from the air station, has been undertaking regular maritime surveillance missions.

#### SpaceX successfully launches latest batch of 60 internet-beaming satellites to orbit

- SpaceX** successfully launched and deployed all **60 Starlink satellites into orbit**.
- The **Falcon 9 rocket** also successfully touched down on the company's drone ship at sea — a smooth landing after two previous failed attempts to recover the vehicle in the ocean.
- SpaceX is pressing ahead with its internet-from-space initiative, launching another batch of 60 broadband-beaming satellites into orbit **from Florida**.
- This is the company's **seventh launch** for its ambitious internet project, known as **Starlink**, and if successful, SpaceX will have put more than 420 of the nearly 12,000 planned satellites into orbit.

- SpaceX hopes to eventually provide global internet coverage from space. Once enough satellites have been launched, the company plans to sell user terminals to customers that will allow them to patch into the satellite network.
- As of now, the plan is to roll out partial coverage to Canada and the northern United States sometime this year, with global coverage potentially becoming available in 2021.

#### Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurates DRDO mobile testing lab

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** inaugurated a **mobile virology research and diagnostics laboratory**, a testing facility developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation that can process **over 1,000 samples in a day**, speed up COVID-19 screening and carry out immune profiling of patients of the virus for vaccine development.
- The mobile lab, which can be positioned anywhere in the country, will also be helpful to carry out the diagnosis of COVID-19, virus culturing for drug screening, convalescent plasma derived therapy and early clinical trials specific to the Indian population.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled via **video conference** a Mobile Virology Research and Diagnostics Laboratory (MVRDL) developed by DRDO in association with ESIC Hospital, Hyderabad and private industry.
- The first of such Mobile Viral Research Lab that will speed up COVID-19 screening and related R&D activities was developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), the Hyderabad based laboratory of DRDO in consultation with ESIC Hospital, Hyderabad.
- The lab is built according to WHO and ICMR bio-safety standards to meet international guidelines. The system has inbuilt electrical controls, LAN, Telephone cabling, and CCTV.

#### NASA develops high-pressure ventilator 'VITAL' to fight COVID-19

- **NASA engineers** have developed a new, easy-to-build high-pressure ventilator tailored specifically to treat COVID-19 patients.
- The device, called **VITAL (Ventilator Intervention Technology Accessible Locally)**, passed a critical test at the Icahn School of Medicine in New York, an epicentre of COVID-19 in the US.
- VITAL is designed to treat patients with milder symptoms, thereby keeping country's limited supply of traditional ventilators available for patients with more severe COVID-19 symptoms.

#### China names its Mars mission Tianwen-1

- **China** named its **first Mars exploration mission** to be launched later this year as **Tianwen-1** as it celebrated **Space Day** on Apr 24 to mark the 50th anniversary of the launch of the country's first satellite Dong Fang Hong-1 in 1970.
- Aiming to catch up with India, U.S., Russia and the European Union to reach the red planet, China's Mars mission plans to complete orbiting, landing and roving in one mission.
- China National Space Administration (CNSA) named the Mars mission as "Tianwen," which means Heavenly Questions or Questions to Heaven, a poem written by China's well known poet Qu Yuan (340-278 BC).
- India became the first Asian country to have successfully launched its Mars orbiter mission, Mangalyaan which has entered the orbit of the red planet in 2014.
- India also became the first country to have entered the Martian orbit in its first attempt.

#### Pakistan Navy successfully test-fires anti-ship missiles in Arabian Sea

- **The Pakistan Navy** successfully test-fired a series of **anti-ship missiles** in the **North Arabian Sea**.
- The missiles were fired from surface ships, fixed and rotary-wing aircraft.

- The announcement was made by Pakistan Navy spokesperson Rear Admiral Arshid Javed and didn't reveal the details of the drill.
- After the removal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) by the Indian government, the relations between India and Pakistan have deteriorated further, which in turn ended diplomatic relations with India.

#### US Navy to host world's largest maritime exercises in Hawaii again this year

- **US Navy** to host **world's largest maritime exercises** in **Hawaii** again this year
- The United States Navy has stated that it will host the world's largest maritime exercises in Hawaii, but the drills will only be held at sea because of the Corona virus.
- The Navy has held the **Rim of the Pacific** exercises in Hawaii every two years since the early 1970s.
- It stated the modified exercise was a way to conduct a meaningful exercise with maximum training value and minimum risk to the force, allies and partners, and the people of Hawaii.
- The drills will also be held over two weeks, from 17th to 31st August, instead of the usual five weeks of events from late June to early August.
- Other RIMPAC participants including Japan have also experienced outbreaks.

### Important Science and Technology

#### NASA Announced New Sunrise Mission To Study Giant Solar Particle Storms

- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** has announced that it has selected a new mission to study giant solar particle storms.
- **The Sun Radio Interferometer Space Experiment (SunRISE)** will look into how Sun generates and releases the giant weather storms, known as the solar particle storms, into space.
- The mission will help in **greater understanding of the solar system**. The findings would safeguard astronauts from solar storms while they travel to Mars or the Moon.
- SunRISE contains six CubeSats which will work together as a large radio telescope. Each of the CubeSats would run on solar power and would be of the size of a toaster oven
- Together, these will observe radio images of low-frequency emission from solar activity and create 3D maps to locate the origin place of a solar particle storm on the Sun. The entire procedure of the storm evolution as it moves outward into the space will be studied too.
- NASA has awarded \$62.6 million for building, designing and launching the mission. It will be headed by Justin Kasper of the University of Michigan and managed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. The launch date of the mission has been set for July 1, 2023.

#### IIT Guwahati develops robots to deliver food, medicines to Covid-19 wards

- Researchers at the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)** are developing **two robots** that can be deployed in **isolation wards for Covid-19** infected cases for delivery of food and medicine to patients and the collection of contagious waste.
- The team from **IIT Guwahati's** Mechanical Engineering and Electrical Engineering departments believes the move will reduce human intervention in isolation wards.
- They are working on two robots--one for medicine and food delivery to isolation wards which can be customised as per the needs of the hospital and the second robot will be specifically for toxic and contagious waste collection from isolation wards, a team member stated.

### IIT Kanpur works on portable ventilator to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak

- **Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur** is working on **portable ventilator** to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. The proto type of this ventilator will be ready soon and just after assembling, it can be used as life support system.
- That keeping the importance of ventilators in mind, Bio Science and Bio Engineering department of IIT Kanpur has prepared a design of live saver portable ventilator. A team of experts from IIT is working for early production of this portable ventilator.
- Professor Amitabh also stated that within 3 to 4 days the proto type will be ready and in one month we will be able to produce maximum number of ventilators to save the lives of public.

### Personal safety app DROR to help users record their social distancing score

- Personal safety app **DROR** has introduced an innovative feature to support the ongoing **social distancing** measures amid the **COVID-19** outbreak in India. Registering with DROR's online community will allow users to track their social distancing score in real-time.
- The '**Social Distancing Tracker**' feature, enables users to maintain their daily social distancing score by exchanging short distance Bluetooth signals between phones to detect other users of the app, who are in close proximity.
- The DROR app processes information based on machine learning and artificial intelligence-based algorithms and alerts users if they get close to a high volume of human contact.

### DRDO develops bio suit to keep personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 safe from virus

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has developed a **bio suit** to keep the medical, paramedical and other personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 safe from the virus.
- The protection against synthetic blood exceeds the criteria defined for body suits by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The current production capacity is 7,000 suits per day. The Ministry stated, efforts are on to ramp up the capacity to 15,000 suits per day.

### China to launch communications satellite named after Wuhan

- **China** will launch the **first two communications satellites** for its space-based Internet-of-Things project this month with one of them named after its birthplace **Wuhan**, the epicentre of coronavirus, officials stated.
- The rocket to send the satellites, **Kuaizhou-1A**, was developed by the **Wuhan-based Sanjiang Group** under the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC).
- The two satellites, **Xingyun-2 01 and 02**, are the first stars of the "**Xingyun Engineering**" project, which is scheduled to complete the network with 80 low-orbit communications satellites.
- They were designed and developed by the Xingyun Satellite Company, a subsidiary of Sanjiang Group. Xingyun-2 01 was named "**Wuhan**".
- It will work for a Chinese low-orbit constellation for **Internet-of-Things (IoT)** communications and be tested in industries related to marine, forestry and engineering machinery, the report stated.

### IIT Roorkee develops low-cost face shields for protection of first line healthcare professionals fighting COVID-19

- **IIT Roorkee** has developed **low-cost face shields** for first line healthcare professionals at **AIIMS Rishikesh** for protection from COVID-19.
- The frame of face shield is **3D printed**. The shield can be used along with the protective gear by healthcare personnel while entering the wards housing COVID-19 patients.

- The spectacle-type design of the protection shield provides the ease of replacement as the transparent sheet is not bound to a reusable frame. The cost of the sheet is as low as Rs 5. The manufacturing cost per shield is approximately Rs 45. Mass manufacturing cost will be less than Rs. 25.

#### IIT Hyderabad incubated startup develops low-cost & portable ventilator

- **Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad Center for Healthcare Entrepreneurship (CfHE)** incubated startup, **Aerobiosys Innovations** has developed a **low-cost, portable, emergency-use ventilator** Called '**Jeevan Lite**'.
- This device offers protection to healthcare providers as well as it is Internet of Things-enabled and can be operated through a phone app. It can also be battery-operated, enabling its deployment in areas without assured power supply.
- The 'Minimal Viable Product' with the required functionality of this ventilator has already been developed.
- Jeevan Lite can perform both the invasive and non-invasive ventilation across a comprehensive set of modes and settings. It can be used for pediatric and adult patients and will work on rechargeable lithium-ion Batteries in an uninterrupted manner for five hours without power supply.
- Aerobiosys Innovations plans to provide **Jeevan Lite at a price of Rs. 1 lakh** (USD \$1,315 approx.) which is significantly economical compared with existing products in the market.
- This would provide enough isolation to the patient and protection to healthcare providers and family members. The **ventilator can be controlled using the app** and **provides real-time display of the waveforms**. Each breath of the patient is recorded and transmitted to the doctors via a connected App to enable telemedicine support. **The device** has a provision for **attaching an oxygen cylinder and can operate on its own in ambient air**.

#### NASA unveils plan for Artemis 'base camp' on the moon beyond 2024

- **NASA** is forging ahead with its **Artemis program** to land humans on the **moon by 2024**, but the agency has also just offered its first plan for what a U.S. lunar presence may look like after that milestone.
- The new plan comes from a 13-page report submitted on April 2 to the National Space Council, an advisory group to President Donald Trump chaired by Vice President Mike Pence.
- Much of the report, titled "NASA's Plan for Sustained Lunar Exploration and Development," summarizes the vision NASA has laid out for justifying and accomplishing the 2024 moon landing. But the report also looks farther out to focus on what a long-term presence on the moon and in lunar orbit would permit the U.S. to accomplish.

#### Scientists discover fossilised remains of a 90-million-year-old rainforest underneath Antarctic ice

- A **group of scientists** has found fossilised remains of a **temperate rainforest** underneath the **Antarctic ice**.
- The 'unexpected' discovery has been compared to **New Zealand's rainforest** of the current generation and is believed to have been growing around **90-million-years ago**.
- The scientists believe the rainforest was present during the **mid-Cretaceous period**, which began 145 million years ago.
- During the study, the scientists analysed sediment cores taken from the West Antarctic shelf. It revealed forest soils, roots, pollen, and spores, following which the scientists deduced the continent had an '**exceptionally warm climate**' during the **mid-Cretaceous period**.
- The scientists stated the 90-million-year-old soil was very well preserved to contain traces of pollen, spores and also remnants of flowering plants.
- The next part of the study involved CT-scanning the soil to see how deep the roots of the core went. Following this, the scientists learned the roots went much deeper than what they had expected.

### DRDO, Wipro 3D develop full face shield for healthcare personnel treating COVID-19 patients

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and private firm Wipro 3D have together developed a **full face shield for doctors and medical staff** treating COVID-19 patients. The shield will protect healthcare personnel from direct infection.
- DRDO has already supplied masks, full-body suits and personal protection equipment (PPE) for the medical staff.
- To ensure that front line health workers are protected against the contagious virus, the **DRDO has developed a bio-suit** to keep them safe. DRDO laboratories are using their technical know-how and expertise in textile, coating and nanotechnology to develop PPE having a specific type of fabric with coating.
- DRDO is also working on a **multi patient-ventilator** to help meet the shortage of critical equipment for COVID-19 patients.
- Recently, The **DRDO Laboratory at Vehicle Research Development Establishment (VRDE), Ahmednagar, in Maharashtra** has designed a **full body disinfection chamber** called as **Personnel Sanitisation Enclosure (PSE)**.

### From 'GoCoronaGo' to 'Sampark-o-Meter': IISc, IITs develop mobile apps to aid fight COVID-19

- From "GoCoronaGo" to "Sampark-o-Meter", the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore and four Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have developed several mobile applications to aid the fight against coronavirus in the country.

#### GoCoronaGo

- The app "GoCoronaGo" has been developed by a team at IISc which can help identify people who may have crossed paths with COVID-19 suspects.
- It also has a geo-fencing feature for those who are under quarantine, and has the ability to provide their symptoms which is used in the risk evaluation

#### Sampark-o-Meter

- A B.Tech student at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar has developed a mobile-based app called "Sampark-o-Meter" which can indicate areas on maps with maximum coronavirus infection possibility.
- "The app generates a 'risk score' after considering various factors and can alert people to take precautionary measures including self-isolate or consulting a doctor.

#### CORONTINE

- Similarly, a team of students and alumni at IIT Bombay, have made a mobile app named "CORONTINE" that will help in tracking the potential or suspected asymptomatic carriers (AC) of coronavirus if they leave their quarantine zone.
- Students at IIT Delhi have also come up with an application to help trace individuals who come in close contact with COVID-19 positive cases.
- Using bluetooth, the application will track and alert all individuals who have been in close vicinity of positive coronavirus cases in the past days.
- IIT Roorkee professor **Kamal Jain** has developed a **tracking app** which can strengthen the surveillance system needed to contain coronavirus
- The app can track individuals and also can do geofencing around him or her.

### IIT Bombay developing nasal gel for capturing COVID-19

- Researchers at IIT Bombay are developing a gel that can be applied to the **nasal passage**, which is a major entry point of the coronavirus.

- **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)**, a statutory body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), is supporting a technology by the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering (DBB), IIT Bombay for capturing and inactivation of novel corona virus.
- The team is planning a two-pronged approach to limit transmission of the virus. Primarily, since viruses replicate within host cells of the lungs, the first component of the strategy will be to inhibit binding of viruses to host cells. While this is expected to reduce host cell infection, viruses will still remain active, therefore, raising the need to inactivate them.
- Secondly, biological molecules would be incorporated, which would inactivate the trapped viruses in a manner similar to that of detergents. Upon completion, this approach will lead to development of gels that can be locally applied in the nasal cavity. This will protect the safety of health workers.

#### **Biofortified carrot variety developed by farmer scientist benefits local farmers**

- **Madhuban Gajar**, a biofortified carrot variety with high  $\beta$ -carotene and iron content developed by **Shri Vallabhhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya**, a farmer scientist from Junagadh district, Gujarat is benefitting more than 150 local farmers in the area.
- It is being planted in an area of over 200 hectares in Junagadh, and the average yield, which is 40-50 t/ha, has become the main source of income to the local farmers. The variety is being cultivated in more than 1000 hectares of land in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh during the last three years.
- The Madhuban Gajar is a highly nutritious carrot variety developed through the selection method with higher  $\beta$ -carotene content (277.75 mg/kg) and iron content (276.7 mg/kg) dry basis and is used for various value-added products like carrot chips, juices, and pickles. Among all the varieties tested, beta-carotene and iron content were found to be superior.
- **National Innovation Foundation (NIF)** – India, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India conducted validation trials for this variety at Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute (RARI), Jaipur, between 2016 and 2017.
- **Shri Vallabhhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya** was conferred with a **National Award** by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi during Festival of Innovation (FOIN) – 2017. He was conferred with **Padma Shri** in the year 2019 for his extraordinary work.

#### **IIT Kanpur develops low cost Personal Protective Equipment**

- **Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur** has developed a **very low cost personal protective equipment**, PPE which can be produced for **less than 100 rupees**.
- Spread of COVID-19 has resulted in a huge demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers in essential services who are exposed to high-risk environments. As standard PPE kits become scarce there is urgent need for low-cost and mass producible alternatives that provide protection for the entire body.
- A team of IIT Kanpur researchers and industry partners has designed the Kit based on thin cylindrical rolls of polythene, which is commonly used in the industry for packaging and making plastic-bags.
- These PPE kits can be mass produced for less than 100 rupees. The design and the production process of the PIPES Kit is open-source which means any small or medium-scale factory anywhere in the country can start manufacturing them in large quantities within a few days.

#### **NIPER-Guwahati designs innovative 3D products to fight COVID-19**

- Researchers at the **National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research - Guwahati (NIPER-G)** have come out with two products that promise to be of great help in the fight against the current pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 infection in the world.
- The first product is a **3D-printed hands-free object** that could be used to help open or close doors, windows, drawers (both vertical and horizontal), and refrigerator handle, or press elevator buttons, and laptop/desktop keyboards, including turning the switch buttons on/off.
- The second product is a **3D-printed antimicrobial face-shield** to control the spread of novel coronavirus. It was designed after a thorough study to understand how the virus spread through oral, ophthalmic, olfactory and other body cavities.

#### **Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog & National Informatics Centre (NIC) jointly launches CollabCAD in ATL schools**

- **Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog and National Informatics Centre (NIC)** jointly launched **CollabCAD**, a collaborative network, computer enabled software system, providing a total engineering solution from **2D drafting & detailing to 3D product design**.
- The aim of this initiative is to provide a great platform to students of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) across country to create and modify 3d designs with free flow of creativity and imagination. This software would also enable students to create data across the network and concurrently access the same design data for storage and visualization.
- ATLs established across India, provide tinkering spaces to children to hone their innovative ideas and creativity. AIM's collaboration with NIC's CollabCAD is a great platform for students to utilize indigenous, state-of-the-art made-in-India software for 3D modeling/slicing to use 3D Printing.
- **AIM** also launched the **Game Development module** in partnership with **DELL Technologies and Learning Links Foundation**. It is an online platform where students can start their learning journey while tinkering from home. Through the platform they can learn to create their own games and also share it with others. This platform envisages to make students transition from 'game players' to 'game makers'.
- Similarly, by launching CollabCAD and gaming module as part of the '**Tinker from Home**' campaign, young students are encouraged to learn and contribute to the journey of nation building from the safe space of their homes.

#### **IIT Guwahati researchers develop antiviral coating for PPEs**

- A team of researchers of **Indian Institute of Technology (IITG) Guwahati** has developed an antimicrobial (antiviral/antibacterial) **spray-based coating for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** and **3D-printed ear guard** for comfortable use of face masks by healthcare workers.
- While PPEs are meant to protect wearers from infectious microbes and virus droplets, they generally do not have the ability to prevent the spread of microbes as the surface of the fabric allows adherence and accumulation of microbes with time. This leads to further spread of the microbes due to negligent handling of PPE and wrong disposal methods.
- IITG, developed the spray-based coating using metal nanoparticles such as copper and silver as well as other active ingredients. The coating is capable of killing or preventing the spread of microbes once they come in contact with the coated PPE surface. Thus, the coating has the potential to reduce the risk of secondary infection by limiting the transmission of the microbes.

#### **Science communication initiative "CovidGyan" launched**

- The topics covered range from the exact behaviour of the novel coronavirus (**SARS-CoV-2**), transmission dynamics of the Corona flu and its diagnostics to innovative technologies to scale up the fight, means of coping up with physical distancing, and critical assessment of communications.
- To bring the scientific and factual aspects of this pandemic outbreak on to public domain, a multi-institutional, multi-lingual science communication initiative, called '**CovidGyan**' has been created.
- The initiative is the brainchild of **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), and Tata Memorial Centre (TMC)**. Several other prominent partners have since joined this noble effort including Vigyan Prasar, IndiaBioscience, and the Bangalore Life Science Cluster (BLiSc), which includes Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine (InStem), Centre for Cellular And Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP), and National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS).
- An outcome of this initiative is the launch of a website that went live on April 03, 2020. This website also named CovidGyan serves as a hub to bring together a collection of resources in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. These resources are generated by public supported research institutions in India and associated programs. The content presented here relies on the best available scientific understanding of the disease and its transmission.

#### **DRDO develops kiosk for COVID-19 sample collection**

- **Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad** has added another product to the portfolio of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to combat **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** by developing **COVID Sample Collection Kiosk (COVSACK)**.
- The unit has been developed by DRDL in consultation with the doctors of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Hyderabad. The COVSACK is a kiosk for use by healthcare workers for taking COVID-19 samples from suspected infected patients. Patient under test walks into the Kiosk and a nasal or oral swab is taken by health care professional from outside through the built in gloves.
- The Kiosk is automatically disinfected without the need for human involvement, making the process free of infection spread. The shielding screen of kiosk cabin protects the health care worker from the aerosols/droplet transmission while taking the sample. This reduces the requirements of PPE change by health care workers.
- After the patient leaves the Kiosk, four nozzle sprayers mounted in the kiosk cabin disinfect the empty chamber by spraying disinfectant mist for a period of 70 seconds. It is further flushed with water & UV light disinfection.
- The system is ready for next use in less than two minutes. Voice command can be given through two-way communication system integrated with the COVSACK. It is possible to configure COVSACK to be used either from inside or outside as required by the medical professionals.
- The **COVSACK** costs nearly **Rs.one lakh** and the identified industry based at Belgaum, Karnataka can support 10 units per day.
- The DRDO has designed and developed two units and handed over these to ESIC Hospital, Hyderabad after successful testing.

#### **NIT-K Professor builds Zero-Cov, a cost-effective disinfectant chamber**

- A team of researchers from **National Institute of Technology-Karnataka** at Surathkal near has developed a cost-effective disinfectant chamber **Zero-Cov** that could disinfect personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, surgical masks, vegetables, packed food and other day-to-day items without causing them damage.

- The chamber is made out of an old refrigerator and uses UV-C radiation with a wavelength of 254 nanometres that could destroy or inactivate all surface contamination — bacteria and viruses up to 99.9 %, including novel coronavirus.
- By placing items, including vegetables and currency, in the **disinfection chamber** for 15 minutes, one can ensure destruction or inactivation of bacteria and viruses up to **99.9 %**. UV technology is well proven and accepted by the scientific community and **World Health Organisation** has recommended this technology for surface disinfection. This is commonly used as disinfection in hospitals, laboratories and at water treatment plants.
- Using an old refrigerator as a chamber and three Ultraviolet C lamps each consuming 11 watts of power, the team has brought out Zero-Cov. The chamber could be made up of any unused material made of metal, plastic or wood, while one UV lamp costs around Rs. 500. It is developed by **Arun M. Islur**, Professor and Head, Department of Chemistry, NITK, along with research scholar **Syed Ibrahim**.

#### **IIT -Ropar designs 'WardBot' to deliver food, medicines to Covid -19 patients**

- A team of researchers at the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Ropar in Punjab's Rupnagar district** has come up with a design of an autonomous '**WardBot**' which can **deliver medicines and food** to COVID-19 patients in isolation wards without human intervention.
- WardBot, fitted with sensors, can work on a known path and can carry food items and medicines for delivery at different beds to patients in a ward.
- The design of an autonomous WardBot is such that it can be instructed to receive and deliver food and medicines and necessary equipment from one room to the other from the remotely located control room.

#### **DRDO introduces products which can enhance ops at public places during pandemic**

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO** in its continuous quest to contribute towards fight against COVID-19, has been developing several solutions from its existing arsenal of technologies and experience.
- DRDO has introduced two products which can enhance the operations at public places during the pandemic. One is **Automatic Mist based Sanitiser Dispensing Unit** and **UV Sanitisation Box** and **Hand-held UV device**.
- Centre for Fire Explosive and Environment Safety, CFEES , Delhi, using its expertise in mist technology for fire suppression, has developed **Automatic Mist based sanitiser dispensing unit**.
- It is a contactless sanitiser dispenser which sprays alcohol based hand rub sanitiser solution for sanitisation of hands while entering the buildings or office complexes. It is based on water mist aerator technology, which was developed for water conservation.
- Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences, DIPAS and Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences, INMAS, DRDO laboratories in Delhi have designed and developed **Ultraviolet C Light based sanitisation box** and hand held UV-C (ultraviolet light with wavelength 254 nanometres) device.
- The **UV-C box** is designed for disinfecting personal belongings like mobile phone, tablets, purse, currency and cover of office files. COVID-19 virus will be deactivated by using UVC lamps in one minute placed equi-distantly in a box with UV dose of 100 mJ/cm<sup>2</sup>. The UV lamps used in the sanitisation box also emits 185 nm which produces ozone and is able to take care of the unexposed area on the surfaces of the objects placed in the box.
- The **hand held device** having eight watt UV-C lamp disinfects office and house hold objects like chairs, files, postal delivered items and food packets with an exposure of 45 second. This measure can reduce the transmission of Coronavirus in office and public environment which is required to work in all conditions.

#### **NASA to launch astronauts to space station from US soil for the first time in a decade**

- The rocket and the spacecraft it is carrying are due to take off from **Florida's Kennedy Space Centre** on 27 May, taking two astronauts to **the International Space Station (ISS)**.
- Both the rocket and spacecraft were developed by private company **SpaceX**.
- Nasa has been using Russian rockets for manned flights since its space shuttle was retired in 2011.
- If successful, SpaceX – headed by billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk - will become the first private firm to send Nasa astronauts into space.
- **The Falcon Nine rocket** and **Crew Dragon spacecraft** will take off from the space centre's **historic Pad 39A**, the same one used for the Apollo and shuttle missions.
- It will take astronauts **Bob Behnken** and **Doug Hurley** approximately 24 hours to reach the ISS. One American astronaut and two Russian cosmonauts are currently aboard the ISS.

#### **Kerala Institute Makes New Diagnostic Test Kit That Can Confirm Covid-19 Samples in 2 Hrs for Rs 1,000**

- **Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, (SCTI) Trivandrum** has developed a **diagnostic test kit** which can confirm COVID-19 cases in just two hours at a cost as low as Rs 1,000.
- The test kit, called '**Chitra GeneLAMP-N**,' is highly specific for SARS-CoV-2 N-gene or the novel coronavirus and is designed to detect two regions of the gene. The test is to give accurate results even after viral gene undergoes mutation during the spread.
- The testing kit's detection time as 10 minutes, and the time of 'sample to result' (from RNA extraction in swab to RT-LAMP detection time) is stated to take less than two hours.
- A total of 30 samples can be tested in a single batch and the machines are estimated to cost Rs 2.5 lakh.
- The testing facility can be easily set up in the laboratories of district hospitals with limited facilities and trained laboratory technicians.

#### **Six-planet system found in almost perfect orbital harmony**

- Scientists have discovered a **six-planet system** -- a "**super-Earth**" and five "**mini-Neptunes**" which display an exceptionally regular spacing, hinting at how the system may have formed.
- The planets revolving the **star HD 158259** in the Draco constellation were found using the **SOPHIE spectrograph** installed at the **Haute-Provence Observatory** in the South of France, according to the study published in the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*.
- SOPHIE observations showed that the planet that is closest to HD 158259 and the five outer planets present masses of two and six times that of the Earth, respectively

#### **Microsoft to launch plasmabot to encourage COVID-19 recovered patients to donate plasma**

- **Microsoft** is launching a **plasmabot** to explore the possibility of treatment for COVID-19. It is encouraging patients who were once infected and now have been completely cured to come forward and donate plasma. To reach a large number of people, Microsoft has decided to come up with a plasmabot.
- A plasmabot is a chatbot that will answer people's queries related to the virus. The plasmabot is slated to go live.
- Plasma is a component of blood that has been used as a treatment for years. When a patient recovers from a disease, they produce antibodies to fight the presence of antigen that causes the disease, like a virus. Those proteins remain in the blood for a few days.
- **Microsoft, in a blogpost**, has stated that there are two possible ways in which plasma can be collected. The first one is to make transfusions directly available to those who are battling the virus. The other approach is to collect

antibodies to make medicine. Donating plasma is similar to donating blood but is reportedly a more elaborate and involved process.

- It takes about an hour to donate plasma. It notes that plasma donors are hooked up to a small device that removes plasma while simultaneously returning red blood cells to their bodies.

#### Cognizant hit by 'Maze' ransomware attack

- **New-Jersey headquartered** IT services provider **Cognizant** had faced a **ransomware** that has caused disruptions to its clients.
- Cognizant can confirm that a security incident involving our internal systems, and causing service disruptions for some of our clients, is the result of a Maze ransomware attack.
- The **Maze ransomware** was discovered in 2019.
- Typically the goal of any ransomware attack is to infect computers in a network and encrypt files on these computers and then demand a ransom to recover the files. Maze, however is different. The attacker has the ability to exfiltrate or transfer the data onto his or her server. The data is then held on this server until a ransom is paid to recover it. If the victim does not pay the ransom, the attackers then publish the data online.

#### Fish gills used to develop efficient low-cost electro-catalysts for rechargeable metal-air battery

- Scientists at the **Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali**, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, have recently come up with an efficient, **low-cost electro-catalyst from fish gills** that can help develop **environmentally friendly energy conversion devices**.
- This bio-inspired carbon nanostructure can help overcome the bottleneck in the realization of several renewable energy conversion and storage technologies such as fuel cell, biofuel cell, and metal-air battery.
- INST have explored a **highly active Oxygen Reduction Reaction (ORR) electrocatalyst** based on binary transition metals Iron (Fe), and Manganese (Mn) and N-doped porous carbon (Fe, Mn, N-FGC), **derived from fish gills (FG)** acquired as **animal waste**, which has a unique porous structure and could provide conductive carbon networks after heat treatment and could be an efficient electrode material. The catalyst was able to show active oxygen reduction reaction in a wide range of pH (pH < 1, 7, and >13) and outperformed the commercial Pt/C catalyst.

#### Facebook to roll out its Covid-19 symptom tracking survey globally to identify potential hotspots

- **Facebook** announced that it will be working on expanding its Covid-19 surveys globally.
- Facebook had launched a **self-assessment pop-up survey** for Facebook users in the United States displaying it on top of a user's News Feed.
- The survey which was created in collaboration with the **Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Delphi Research Center** was part of the social media giant's symptom mapping project to better understand where the next wave of the pandemic is likely to hit.
- Facebook produced its first report on the project along with new interactive maps based on the data.
- The tech giant will now be working with faculty from the University of Maryland to expand the program globally.

#### Pune-based ARI develops 'sensor-based bug sniffer'

- **Pune-based Agharkar Research Institute (ARI)**, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has developed a low-cost sensor device to rapidly detect bacteria.
- The portable device can **detect** as low as **10 bacteria cells** from a sample size of **one milliliter** in just **30 minutes**. At present, the ARI is working on a method for simultaneous separation and detection of Escherichia coli and Salmonella typhimurium.

- **'Bug sniffer,'** which is a **biosensor** that uses synthetic peptides, magnetic nanoparticles, and quantum dots to detect the presence of bacteria, providing a cost- and time-effective way of screening water and food borne pathogens. The researchers also developed a chip consisting of micro-channels made from copper wires and poly (dimethylsiloxane).
- The bug sniffer is affordable, and the raw materials required for making it are readily available. The nano sensor and research for developing it open up many possibilities for a speedy lab-on-a-chip diagnostics.
- Currently, the researchers are working with simultaneous separation and detection of Escherichia coli and Salmonella typhimurium using LAMP (Loop-mediated isothermal amplification), a single-tube technique for the amplification of DNA and a low-cost alternative to detect certain diseases. This work is funded by **Indian Council of Medical Research**.

#### **IIT-Mandi team develops magnetic RAM to enable higher data storage, faster computation**

- **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi, developing magnetic Random Access Memory (RAM)** which is faster, more energy-efficient and capable of storing more information in a smaller volume than existing data storage technologies.
- The team, which is in process of patenting the technology, claims that the **Spin-transfer torque (STT) based nano spintronic devices** will also put an end to computer data loss due to interruptions of power supply and hence will have the capability to transform next-generation computers, smartphones and other gadgets.
- Magnetic RAMs in which data are represented as spin of electrons, promise better storage capabilities than conventional charge-based RAM.
- A device using spintronic technology utilises the spin of the electrons to transmit and process information, unlike normal electronic devices that are driven by electron charges.
- Harnessing the spin of electrons to be manipulated from the magnetic state leads to what is known as **Spin-Transfer Torque-Magnetic Random Access Memory (STT-MRAM)**.
- Existing semiconductor RAM cannot meet these massive demands of data storage. Indeed, experts in data science predict that the demand for memory capacity will outpace production by the end of 2020.
- The five-member team includes Sharma, his colleague Srikant Srinivasan and three research scholars– Mohamad G Moinuddin, Shivangi Shringi and Aijaz H Lone.

#### **SVP Institute becomes first to carry out plasma research in view of Covid-19**

- **Ahmedabad based SardarVallabhbhai Patel Institute of Medical Science and Research** became the first authorized study centre in the country to carry out **plasma research** under trial in view of Covid 19. **The MoU** was signed between **ICMR** and **the institute** in this regard.
- SVP institute is a government hospital run by City Municipal Corporation which has become a major treatment centre for Covid 19 patients.

#### **About Plasma Therapy**

- The convalescent plasma therapy aims at using antibodies from the blood of a recovered Covid-19 patient to treat those critically affected by the virus. The therapy can also used to immunise those at a high risk of contracting the virus -- such as health workers, families of patients and other high-risk contacts.
- This therapy's concept is simple and is based on the premise that the blood of a patient who has recovered from Covid-19 contains antibodies with the specific ability of fighting novel coronavirus. The theory is that the recovered patient's antibodies, once ingested into somebody under treatment, will begin targetting and fighting the novel coronavirus in the second patient.

### IGIB scientists develop low cost COVID-19 test 'Feluda'

- Scientists at the **CSIR's Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology** have come up with a **lowcost coronavirus test** that will not require any expensive machines for detection of the pathogen.
- Named after '**Feluda**', the detective character in legendary filmmaker **Satyajit Ray's stories**, the test has been developed by **Debojyoti Chakraborty** and **Souvik Maiti** as a simpler way of detecting SARS-CoV2 presence in clinical samples.
- **CSIR** is a department under the **Union Ministry of Science and Technology**. It starts the same way as a normal real time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), which is extraction of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and its conversion to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).
- It then differs by using a specifically designed PCR reaction to amplify a part of the viral nucleic acid sequence. Then a highly specific CRISPR, FnCAS9, developed at IGIB, binds to that sequence.
- Using the innovative chemistry on a paper strip, the CRISPR complex, bound to that specific sequence, can be visualised as a positive band like one sees in simple pregnancy tests. The **total time** required for the test is **less than one hour**.

### IIT-Delhi develops COVID-19 test kit, gets ICMR's approval

- **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi** has developed a COVID-19 test kit, which has got the approval of **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.
- "Testing will be cheaper than all existing devices," he stated, adding that the device is affordable for commercial production.
- ICMR had approved detection assay for COVID-19, which has been developed by researchers at IIT-Delhi's Kusuma School of Biological Sciences (KSBS).
- The assay has been validated at the ICMR with a sensitivity and specificity of 100 per cent. This makes IIT-Delhi the first academic institute to have obtained ICMR approval for a real-time PCR-based diagnostic assay," statement from IIT-Delhi.

### IIT Roorkee professor developed a software that detects Coronavirus in five seconds by using the patient's X-ray scan

- An **IIT-Roorkee** professor claims to have developed a **software** which can detect COVID-19 within five seconds using an X-ray scan of the suspected patient.
- The professor, who took over 40 days to develop the software, has filed a patent for the same and has approached the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for a review.
- **Kamal Jain**, a professor at the institute's civil engineering department, claims that the software will not only reduce testing costs but will also reduce the risk of exposure to healthcare professionals.
- Using the software developed, the doctors can simply upload pictures of an individual's X-ray. The software will not only classify whether the patient has any sign of pneumonia, it will be able to tell whether it is due to COVID-19 or other bacteria and also measure the severity of the infection. The results can be processed within five seconds.

### Kerala government hospital deploys robot "KARMI-Bot" to serve COVID-19 patients

- Malayalam star **Mohanlal's Viswasanthi Foundation** donated the autonomous robot to the COVID-19 ward of the Ernakulam government medical college hospital.
- The robot named "**KARMI-Bot**" will be used to assist patients at the medical college's COVID-19 isolation ward.
- Robot is developed by **ASIMOV robotics**, a company working under maker village of Kerala start-up mission.

- The purpose of this project is to limit the interaction between COVID-19 patients and health workers as well as to address the shortage of PPE kits by minimizing its use.
- The robot will be able to perform its duties fully autonomously. Carrying a payload of up to 25 kgs, the robot is capable of achieving a maximum speed of 1m per sec. UV based disinfection and targeted detergent spray are the additional capabilities of KARMI-Bot, which featured in the latest cover story of Forbes magazine.
- ASIMOV Robotics aims to incorporate contactless routine temperature checking and automated charger docking to KARMI- Bot, once the spare parts are available after lock down.

#### Team Led By IIT Bombay Student Develops Low-Cost Mechanical Ventilator 'Ruhdaar'

- A team of engineering students from IIT Bombay, NIT Srinagar and Islamic University of Science & Technology (IUST), Awantipora, Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir has come up with a **low-cost ventilator** using locally available materials.
- The project head Zulqarnain, a first-year student of Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay teamed up with his friends PS Shoib, Asif Shah and Shakar Nehvi from IUST, Awantipora and Majid Koul from NIT Srinagar.
- Taking assistance from the Design Innovation Centre (DIC) at IUST, the team has been able to design a low-cost ventilator using locally available materials.
- The prototype cost the team around Rs. 10,000 and that the cost will be much lower, while high-end ventilators used in hospitals cost in lakhs of rupees.
- **Ruhdaar** provides necessary functionalities which can provide adequate breathing support necessary to save the life of a critically ill COVID-19 patient.
- It has been able to achieve control of basic parameters such as tidal volume, Breaths per Minute and Inspiratory: Expiratory Ratio and to also monitor pressure continuously during its operation.

#### HCARD robot to assist frontline Covid-19 healthcare workers

- The robotic device **HCARD**, in short for **Hospital Care Assistive Robotic Device**, can help frontline healthcare workers in maintaining **physical distance** from those infected by coronavirus.
- HCARD is developed by Durgapur-based **CSIR lab, Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute**. The device is equipped with various state-of-the-art technologies and works both in automatic as well as manual modes of navigation.
- This robot can be controlled and monitored by a nursing booth with a control station having such features as navigation, drawer activation for providing medicines and food to patients, sample collection and audio-visual communication.
- **CSIR-CMERI** is working on war footing to minimize the impact of COVID-19 through technological interventions. As spelt out by WHO, personal protective equipment (PPE) is very important in preventing transmission of coronavirus in the society, the Institute has channelized its resources optimally to develop PPE and community-level safety equipment for helping the public at large and healthcare institutions.
- Scientists at CMERI have also developed a few other customized technologies, including Disinfection Walkway, Road Sanitizer Unit, Face Mask, Mechanical Ventilator and Hospital Waste Management Facility.

#### Revision Points

Institutions/Persons	Things to be Discovered
IIT Guwahati	2 robots to deliver Medicines to Covid-19 wards

DRDO	Bio suits
IIT Roorkee	Low-cost face shields
IIT Hyderabad	Low cost ventilator named 'Jeevan Lite'
DRDO & Wipra	Full face shield for doctors
IISc	GoCoronaGo App
IIT Ropar	Sampark-o-Meter
IIT Bombay	CORONITE
IIT Bombay	Nasal gel for capturing COVID-19
Shri Vallabhbhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya	Biofortified carrot
IIT Kanpur	Personal Protective Equipment
NIPER - Guwahati	3-D printed hands free object & 3-D printed antimicrobial face shield
Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog & NIC	CollanCAD
IIT Guwahati	Spray based coating for PPE
DRDO	Kiosk for COVID -19
NIT - Karnataka	Zero-Cov
IIT Ropar	WardBot
DRDO	Automatic Mist based Sanitiser Dispensing Unit and UV Sanitisation Box and Hand-held UV device
Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum	Chitra GeneLAMP-N
Microsoft	Plasmabot
Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali	low-cost electro-catalyst from fish gills
Agharkar Research Institute, Pune	Bug sniffer
IIT Mandi	Magnetic RAM
CSIR's Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology	Feluda
IIT Roorkee	A Software to detect COVID-19 within 5s using X-Ray
Mohanlal's Viswasanthi Foundation	KARMI-Bot
CSIR Lab	HCARD

### Important Ranking and Indexes

Index	India's Rank	Top	Released By
Global Press Freedom Index	142	Norway (1 <sup>st</sup> ) North Korea (180 <sup>th</sup> )	Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) or Reporters Without Borders
Open Budget Survey	53	New Zealand (1 <sup>st</sup> )	International Budget Partnership

#### RIL overtakes TCS to become most valued firm

- **Reliance Industries Limited (RIL)** surpassed TCS to become the most valued domestic firm by **market capitalisation**.
- The market capitalisation (m-cap) of **RIL** was **Rs 7,05,211.81 crore**, which was Rs 21,133.32 crore more than that of **Tata Consultancy Services' Rs 6,84,078.49 crore** valuation on the BSE.
- Shares of RIL zoomed 7.76 percent to close at Rs 1,112.45, while TCS rose 2.64 percent to Rs 1,823.05.
- **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** had reclaimed its status as the country's most valued firm by **market valuation**.

#### Tamil Nadu finishes on top in micro-irrigation coverage

- **TN State** finished on **top** at the all-India level for **micro-irrigation coverage**.
- This has been achieved as part of implementation of the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**, a programme aimed at promoting the **"more crop per drop"** concept by focussing on water-saving technologies.
- The overall figure was 2.06 lakh ha, surpassing the performance of consistently high-performers such as Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
- The cumulative total coverage under the PMKSY during 2015-2020, Tamil Nadu occupies the fourth spot with about 5.62 lakh ha.
- The first place goes to Karnataka (8.16 lakh ha) followed by Andhra Pradesh (7.17 lakh ha) and Gujarat (7 lakh ha). At the all-India level, 43.71 lakh ha of lands were brought under micro irrigation in the last five years.

#### Extra incentive By TN govt

- The State government had given subsidy in addition to what was provided by the Centre to small and marginal farmers and big farmers. For example, for sugarcane, small and marginal farmers get 100% subsidy for laying drip system and big farmers, 75%.
- By developing an exclusive website **"Micro Irrigation Management Information System" (MIMIS)**, the implementation — from registration of beneficiaries to the final round of release of funds — has been made online, simplifying the procedure and speeding up the approval process.
- The State government has absorbed the cost of 12% goods and services tax (GST) on micro irrigation components.

#### Bengaluru voted best city for IT professionals: Survey

- Even as there are traffic snarls, most IT professionals consider **Bengaluru** as the best city to work for as the city offers high living standards, highest appraisal and career growth opportunities, according to a survey.
- Over 40 per cent of information technology (IT) professionals voted Bengaluru as the top city to work, according to TechGig's survey.
- **Hyderabad and Pune** secured the second and third spots, respectively, with 13 per cent and 11 per cent votes, it stated.
- **Delhi-NCR** (20 per cent) secured the least votes among the preferred city chart, it stated.

- While Kolkata with 21 per cent votes fared slightly better than Delhi-NCR, it added.
- The survey was conducted online at the beginning of April among over 1,830 IT professionals in the 25-35 years age group having at least two years of experience.
- Further, the survey has showed that 58 per cent of IT professionals prefer Bengaluru as the city provides high living standards.
- About 71 per cent voted the city as the best with regards to salary hike, while 68 per cent voted for the city for career growth and job opportunities.
- Bengaluru wins the first spot among experienced professionals and freshers alike as 61 per cent respondents stated that the city offered best opportunities for IT professionals to kick-start their career in the industry, the survey added.

#### China becomes world's top patent filer, surpassing US for 1st time in 4 decades

- **China** became the world leader in international patent filings, unseating the **United States**, which had held the top spot for more than four decades, the U.N. stated
- The record 265,800 international patent applications were filed last year, marking a hike of 5.2% from 2018, the World Intellectual Property Organisation stated in its annual report.
- The WIPO's complex system of registering international patents involves multiple categories.
- **China** and **the United States** were followed by **Japan, Germany** and **South Korea** as the world's top patent application filers, the WIPO found.
- The WIPO report showed Asian-based applicants accounting for 52.4% of all filings, while Europe and North America accounted for less than a quarter each.
- Meanwhile, for the third consecutive year, China-based telecoms giant Huawei Technologies topped the global ranking in 2019, with 4,411 PCT applications.

#### Forbes Billionaires List 2020

- **Amazon Inc's CEO Jeff Bezos** maintains the **top spot globally** for another year despite a **plunge of \$18 billion** in his wealth. With a net worth of **\$113 billion**, he is the richest person in the world on Forbes Billionaires List 2020, followed by **Microsoft founder Bill Gates** with a fortune of **\$98 billion** and LVMH's **Bernard Arnault at \$76 billion**.
- Among the 2,095 billionaires on the list, Indian tycoon **Mukesh Ambani** ranks **21st globally** with a net worth of **\$44.3 billion**. The Chairman of Reliance Industries Limited topped the annual ranking from India's perspective in the previous year as well.
- The **second** on the rich list was **DMart's Radhakishan Damani & Family** with their wealth at **\$13.8 billion** and **78th in the global** ranking.

#### List of Top 10 Billionaires

1. Jeff Bezos (Amazon) – \$113 bn
2. Bill Gates (Microsoft) – \$98 bn
3. Bernard Arnault (LVMH) – \$76 bn
4. Warren Buffett (Berkshire Hathaway) – \$67.5 bn
5. Larry Ellison (Software) – \$59 bn
6. Amancio Ortega (Zara) – \$55.1 bn
7. Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) – \$54.7 bn
8. Jim Walton (Walmart) – \$54.6 bn
9. Alice Walton (Walmart) – \$54.4 bn

10. Rob Walton (Walmart) – \$54.1 bn

#### India retains 108th spot at FIFA's latest ranking

- **India football team** retained its **108th spot** in the latest **FIFA rankings**.
- **Belgium and France** retained their **first and second positions** respectively in the latest rankings. **Brazil** is on the **third place** followed by England.
- In the wake of the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic, qualifier tournaments have been postponed for the FIFA World Cup and other major games at the international level. Not only this, due to Corona, the Olympic football tournament, CONMEBOL (South American Football Confederation) Copa America and UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) EURO also had to cancel famous events.

#### Ujjivan SFB ranked 5th among 'Best Large Workplaces'

- **Ujjivan Small Finance Bank** has been ranked **5th among 'Best Large Workplaces in Asia 2020'** by the Great Place To Work Institute. In 2019, **Ujjivan SFB** was ranked **16th** in the Best Large Workplaces in Asia.
- Ujjivan SFB has been consistently featured in the list of best companies to work for by the Great Place To Work Institute for nearly a decade.
- The bank was ranked based on two parameters which includes Trust Index Score that is based on employees' feedback in the survey and Culture Audit Score basis a detailed write up on Ujjivan SFB's 15 best practice areas.

#### J&K bags three national awards for outstanding contribution by its Panchayati Raj Institutions

- **Jammu and Kashmir** UT has bagged **three national awards** under separate categories for outstanding contribution by its **Panchayati Raj Institutions** towards socio-economic development of Gram Panchayats, adopting child-friendly practices and preparing Gram Panchayat Development Plans at panchayat level.
- The awards were given under three different categories -Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP), Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) Award, Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award by Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt of India to recognise the efforts and work done by best performing panchayats all over the country.
- The awards are aimed at to strengthen the institution of Gram Sabhas highlighting it as an institution of decision making. Panchayat, **Jamola Lower of District Rajouri** has been awarded **child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award 2020** for adopting best practices in terms of ensuring timely vaccination of children, optimum enrolment, attendance of teachers in schools, reduction of drop-out rate in schools, open defecation free status, implementation of Mid-day Meal scheme and drinking water facilities.
- **Panchayat Dhangri** of the same district has been awarded with **Nanaji Deshmukh Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar** for outstanding performance in improving the socio-economic fabric of the panchayat.
- Similarly, Panchayat Zaloor B of District Baramulla has been adjudged as best performing GP for the Gram Panchayat Development Plans awards for preparing holistic and comprehensive development plan for the panchayat.

#### Mukesh Ambani back on top as Asia's richest man

- Following the Rs.43,574-crore **Facebook-Jio Platforms deal**, billionaire **Mukesh Ambani** has clawed back his position as Asia's richest man, a position he lost to Chinese technology giant **Alibaba founder Jack Ma** in March.
- In January this year, Mukesh Ambani's net worth stood at \$67 billion, making him the richest Asian, while that of Jack Ma stood at \$45 billion, according to data compiled by Hurun Report. This was based on a conversion rate of Rs.71 to a dollar.

- However, two months into the Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent oil price crash, Ambani's net worth fell to \$39 billion, while that of Jack Ma stood at \$47 billion.
- Following the Facebook-Jio Platforms deal, the equation changed again, and **Ambani's net worth rose to \$60 billion** as the markets cheered the deal. **Jack Ma's net worth** at the time of the Facebook deal was at **\$43 billion**, which helped Ambani regain his position as Asia's richest person.

#### India third largest military spender in world, after US and China

- India has become the **third largest military spender in the world**, after **the US and China**, according to a **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** report.
- This is the first time that India and China are among the top three military spenders.
- **India's** military spending **grew by 6.8 percent** to **\$71.1 billion** in 2019, according to the SIPRO report on **"Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019"**. This was the **highest** military spending in **South Asia**.
- Military spending by the **US**, which is the highest, **grew by 5.3 per cent** to a total of **\$732 billion** in 2019 and accounted for 38 per cent of global military spending.
- In 2018, India was the fourth largest military spender, a spot below Saudi Arabia. India had spent \$66.5 billion in 2018.
- In 2019, Saudi Arabia's decrease and the increase in Russia's spending (4.5 per cent) led to **Russia** moving to **fourth position** from fifth, while **Saudi Arabia** fell from third to **fifth**.

#### IIT-Kharagpur ranked top in India, 57th globally in THE Impact Rankings

- IIT-Kharagpur was ranked the **most impactful Indian institute** and **57th globally** in Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2020 out of over 766 universities from 89 countries and regions.
- The index ranked higher educational institutes in terms of social and economic impact they make in society.
- **University of Auckland** topped the list followed by University of Sydney and Western Sydney University.

#### Biocon chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw recognised among world's top 20 inspirational leaders in Biopharma

- **Biocon Ltd** announced that **The Medicine Maker Power List 2020** has ranked its **Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw** as one of the world's top 20 inspirational leaders in the field of biopharmaceuticals.
- She has been recognised for her contribution to the world of medicine as an entrepreneur and innovative business leader.
- The Medicine Maker 2019 Power List is now online at <https://themedicinemaker.com/power-list/2019>
- **Shaw** has been featuring on The **Medicine Maker Power List** for **six consecutive years since 2015**.

#### Important Books and Authors

Authors/ Released by	Books
Mary Jordan	The Art of Her Deal
Krishnaswamy V	Shuttling to the Top: The Story of P.V. Sindhu
Sudha Murty	How the Onion Got Its Layers (Audio Format) Second book of 'How the Sea Became Salty'
Uma Balasubramaniam	Sayajirao Gaekwad III: The Maharaja of Baroda

#### Two new books to hit the stands in May of understanding CORONA

- The books, "**How Contagion Works: Science, Awareness and Community in Times of Global Crisis**" by Italian physicist **Paolo Giordano** and "**Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs**" by epidemiologist **Michael Osterholm** and author **Mark Olshaker**, will hit the stands in May.
- It is published by **Hachette**.
- The "**Deadliest Enemy**" is an attempt to explore the "**resources and programs**" to keep people **safe from infectious diseases**.
- "**How Contagion works**", a slim read, is a mix of author's moving account of putting up under lockdown Italy, decoding maths behind the contagion and interconnected lives in the times of globalization.
- "**Contagion by numbers**" -- explaining how contagion works and why people should **limit their exposure to the outside world** which contributed to a shift in the public discourse around the virus in Italy.
- Giordano's first novel, "The Solitude of Prime Numbers", was translated into more than 40 languages worldwide and won the Premio Strega, the most prestigious Italian literary award.

### **Important Sports News**

#### **Football**

#### **FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup, scheduled in November postponed**

- The **FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup**, which was scheduled to be played in **India** between November 2nd and 21st, has been postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. In a statement, FIFA stated, the new dates for the tournament will be identified later.
- The decision was taken by the FIFA-Confederations working group in its first meeting. The working group also postponed FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup which was scheduled between August and September in Panama and Costa Rica. The working group has been recently established by the FIFA Council to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Under-17 Women's World Cup was scheduled to be played in India across five host cities - Navi Mumbai, Guwahati, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar.

#### **All India Football Federation submits bid to host AFC Asian Cup 2027**

- **India** has submitted its bid documents for **hosting the AFC Asian Cup in 2027**, a top official of the national federation confirmed.
- If India wins the bid, it will be the first time the country will host the continental showpiece event.
- Recently, the AFC had extended the deadline to lodge expression of interest by three months from March 31 to June 30 in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The AFC is expected to announce the host country early next year.
- Other than India, Saudi Arabia, which has won the continental title three times but never hosted the tournament, is only nation to have publicly announced their intention to launch a bid for 2027 Asian Cup.
- **India** had joined the race for the **2023 AFC Asian Cup**, alongside **Thailand, Indonesia** and **South Korea**, but pulled out early in October 2018.
- Later, Thailand and South Korea also pulled out leaving **China** the sole country to host the **2023** tournament.

#### **SAI, AIFF join hands to launch online coaching programme during lockdown**

- **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** in collaboration with the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** has arranged for an **Online Coach Education Programme**, that gets underway on April 20, 2020.

- The 13-day Refresher Course which concludes on May 2, 2020 will be open to all SAI and AIFF Licensed Coaches with around 400-500 coaches being expected to join online.
- The opening session of the programme will be conducted by **Medeira** himself, with successive sessions being held by several AIFF instructors, including current Senior Indian Men's National Team Head Coach Igor Stimac, AIFF Technical Director Isac Doru, among others.

### Other Sports News

#### World athletics championships moving to 2022

- The **2021 world athletics championships** in **Eugene, Oregon** will be shifted to **2022** to accommodate the re-arranged Tokyo Olympics, World Athletics stated.
- The announcement came immediately after Olympics organisers stated the 2020 Tokyo Games -- postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic -- will now take place on **July 23-August 8, 2021**.
- World Athletics stated they were also "in discussions" with the Commonwealth Games Federation, the organisers of the Commonwealth Games that are currently scheduled to be held in the English city of Birmingham on July 27-August 7, 2022.
- The athletics federation stated it was also talking to the organisers of the 2022 European Athletics Championships, which are due to take place in Munich on August 11-21.
- There has been no decision yet whether to postpone this year's European championships, slated for Paris between August 26-30.
- Track and field is the traditional centrepiece of the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games.

#### Wimbledon Tennis tournament canceled for the first time since World War-II

- **Wimbledon**, the **oldest Grand Slam tennis tournament**, has been cancelled for the first time since **World War-II** because of the **Coronavirus pandemic**.
- Tournament organizer, All England Club (AELTC) after an emergency meeting announced that the Championships 2020 will be cancelled due to public health concerns linked to the **Novel Coronavirus epidemic**.
- The tournament was due to be played between 29 June and 12 July. The entire grass-court season has been abandoned, and there will be no professional tennis anywhere in the world until at least 13 July.

#### Official mascots of 19th Asian Games unveiled in Hangzhou, China

- The official mascots of the **19th Asian Games** were unveiled at a digital launch ceremony in Hangzhou, China. The three robots, which are going to be the mascots for the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games are collectively known as the smart triplets.
- The Mascots - **Congcong**, **Lianlian** and **Chenchen**, which reflect the internet prowess of Hangzhou city and Zhejiang province, were unveiled at a digital ceremony in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that has brought the whole world to a standstill.
- The Olympic Council of Asia's **19th Asian Games** will be held in Hangzhou from September 10 to 25, 2022. It will be the third Asian Games to be hosted by China following Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010, with the participation of 45 NOCs of Asia in 42 sports.

#### World Games in Birmingham, Alabama postponed until 2022

- The **World Games** is a showcase for athletes who compete in eclectic array of sports that have one thing in common: They are not part of the regular Olympic program.

- Now, they'll have to wait an extra year to take part in their Olympic-style competition because of the Tokyo Summer Games being pushed back to **2021**.
- Joining the parade of postponed events in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, officials announced the **11th edition of the World Games in Birmingham, Alabama** will now be held in the **summer of 2022**.
- The new dates are **July 7-17** for a sprawling competition that will feature disciplines such as tug of war, orienteering, korfbal, billiards, sumo, lifesaving and dance.
- The World Games were initially set for July 15-25, 2021, but a change was hastily arranged after the International Olympic Committee approved new dates for Tokyo.
- The Summer Games will now be held **July 23-Aug. 8, 2021**, which would have overlapped with the last three days of the World Games.

#### **IWF: Thailand, Malaysia banned from weightlifting at Tokyo Olympics**

- The **Independent Member Federation Sanctions Panel (IMFSP)** of the **International Weightlifting Federation (IWF)** has imposed disciplinary sanctions on **Thailand and Malaysia** and banned both the countries to from participating in weightlifting events at the Tokyo Olympics.
- The IMFPS also suspended the **Thai Amateur Weightlifting Association (TAWA)** for three years, while the **Malaysian Weightlifting Federation (MWF)** has been given a one-year ban.
- However, both the federations have a 21-day window to challenge the decision and appeal in the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).
- Additionally, the Thai federation has also been fined USD 2,00,000, half of which "shall be used by IWF to offset IWF costs already incurred in connection with the TAWA matter and for additional IWF testing of TAWA athletes", the panel stated.
- The decision was confirmed by the IOC after the organising body for the event and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed to reschedule the Tokyo Olympics in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The IOC had, however, stated that the original name of Tokyo 2020 will remain intact irrespective of the fact that it will take place next year.
- The Tokyo Olympics 2020 will now commence from July 23 to August 8 next year while the Paralympics Games will be held from August 24 to September 5, 2021.

#### **2020 USA Fencing National Championships postponed due to coronavirus pandemic**

- **USA fencing** decided to postpone **the 2020 USA Fencing National Championships** to late July or early August (2020) in order to protect the health of coaches, tournament staff and spectators.
- The decision on the tournament which was originally scheduled for **June 28 - July 7** will be made in keeping with guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control as well as local, state and federal regulations.

#### **India to host Asian Championship in Nov-Dec this year: Boxing federation**

- The **Boxing Federation of India (BFI)** has stated it will host the Asian Boxing Championships for men and women in November-December, factoring India would have controlled the coronavirus outbreak by then.
- India last hosted the men's Asian meet back in 1980 in Mumbai, while it conducted the women's event in 2003 in Hisar. The tournament became a combined event for men and women in 2019.
- The event is usually a biennial competition but has been held in consecutive years in the past.

#### **Hockey India postpones all its rescheduled national championships**

- **Hockey India** postponed all its **rescheduled national championships** indefinitely after the national lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic was extended till **May 3**. These tournaments were rescheduled to start on April 29 and continue till July 3 but have been suspended for now.
- Hockey India President **Mohd Mushtaque Ahmad** stated that a decision has been taken to postpone the remaining annual **2020 Hockey India National Championships** keeping in mind the well-being of all our stakeholders including the players, coaches, organisers, fans and officials. He stated new dates will be announced based on the evolution of the COVID-19 situation in India.

#### **Mascot for Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games unveiled**

- The mascot for the **4th Asian Para Games** scheduled to be held here from **October 9 in 2022** at **Hangzhou, China** was unveiled. The design of '**Feifei**' is inspired by the motif of the '**Divine Bird**' in the Liangzhu Culture.
- The mascot is the fusion of Hangzhou's heritage and its drive for technological innovation, carrying the longing for harmonious co-existence between humans and nature.
- The first 'fei' means the birds flying, implying inclusiveness, respect, and fraternity of human society. And the second 'fei' represents the mental tenacity of the athletes with disabilities pursuing dreams and reaching beyond themselves.
- The 4th Asian Para Games will be held from October 9-15, 2022, featuring 22 sports with Taekwondo and Para-Canoe to make their Games debuts.

#### **World's most famous cycling race Tour de France postponed in wake of Corona virus pandemic**

- The world's most famous **cycling race Tour de France** has been postponed in the wake of Corona virus pandemic.
- The three-week race was set to start on 27th of June in the Riviera city of Nice has been set for August. This year's event has 21 stages, with the longest of them stretching 218 kilometres (135 miles).
- The decision came after French President Emmanuel Macron announced in his speech to the nation that all public events with large crowds have been cancelled until at least mid-July.
- The last time the Tour was not held was in 1946, with the nation still emerging from World War-II. It was also stopped during World War-I.

#### **World Rugby announces USD 100 million relief fund amid coronavirus crisis**

- **World Rugby** will make almost **\$100 million** available to help nations through the Covid-19 pandemic which it calls an unprecedented threat to the global game.
- Most major unions have already been forced to cut players' salaries and slash administrative costs as the virus outbreak has forced professional competitions around the world to close.
- World Rugby announced its response in a statement saying stakeholders are united in tackling the "**unprecedented Covid-19 challenge.**"
- The relief fund will help nations weather the financial impact of the virus outbreak. At the same time World Rugby will work globally to decide on "a viable return to rugby" and to develop a "blueprint for potential long-term calendar overhaul."

#### **Laver Cup Postponed Until 2021 Due To French Open Clash**

- The **fourth edition** of the **Laver Cup** has been postponed from **September 2020 to 2021** because of scheduling conflicts with other tennis events in a year disrupted by COVID-19, organizers.
- The Europe v World men's team tournament had been scheduled for Boston from September 25-27, but those dates clash with the new dates selected by the French Tennis Federation for the postponed French Open, now scheduled for September 20-October 4.

- The tournament will now be held **September 24-26, 2021**, also in **Boston**.
- Men's and women's tennis has been put on hold amid the coronavirus pandemic, with both the ATP and WTA shut down until July 13 at the earliest.

#### **NADA and BFI conduct online anti-doping awareness session**

- The **National Anti Doping Agency (NADA)** in collaboration with **Boxing Federation of India (BFI)** conducted an online anti-doping awareness session.
- Utilising the lockdown period, **Dr Ankush Gupta** of NADA took a special interactive session on "**Anti-Doping Awareness**" which was attended by 450 participants.
- NADA is using this period to create awareness amongst athletes as the body has minimised dope testing due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

#### **World Games Birmingham unveils new title, logo after postponement of event**

- The **World Games in Birmingham, Alabama** has unveiled an updated logo and title after being delayed a year because of the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Olympic-style competition for sports and events that are not on the Summer Games program will now be known as **The World Games 2022**.
- The event was initially scheduled for July 2021, but it will now be held in July 2022 to accommodate the one-year postponement of the 2020 Summer Olympics.
- While those games will continue to be known as "**Tokyo 2020**," the World Games decided to go with a more accurate moniker.

#### **Charles Leclerc wins Chinese Virtual Grand Prix**

- **Charles Leclerc of Ferrari** has won the **Chinese Virtual Grand Prix** defeated **Red Bull's Alex Albon**.
- Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the actual F1 races are not being held. In its place, Formula 1 has announced new F1 Esports Virtual Grand Prix series. The **virtual races** will run in place of every postponed Grand Prix.
- The series will use the official F1 2019 PC video game, developed by **Codemasters**.

#### **Alireza Firouzja defeats Magnus Carlsen in final of Banter Blitz Cup**

- Iranian refugee **Alireza Firouzja** shocked the world when he upset **Carlsen** in the final of the \$78,000 **Banter Blitz Cup in a battle**.
- Carlsen, the reigning world champion and chess "grand master," may have got a taste of his next world title defence when teenage talent Firouzja knocked him off 8.5 to 7.5 in a marathon series of bullet matches.
- The Chess24 online tournament saw Firouzja best 132 players in a knock-out style tournament that included 109 grand masters going head to head.

#### **French Grand Prix becomes 10th race to get cancelled over coronavirus**

- The organisers of the **French Grand Prix** confirmed that the event will not go ahead in **2020**, in light of the coronavirus pandemic.
- The race was scheduled to take place at **Circuit Paul Ricard** at the **end of June**, but officials announced that the decision of the French government to ban all major events until at least the middle of July, coupled with the travel restrictions in place to help contain the spread of coronavirus, meant it will be impossible for the Grand Prix to go ahead as planned, the Formula 1's official website stated.
- It becomes the **10th race of the 2020 season** to have been cancelled or postponed in light of the current health crisis.

## India lose hosting rights of 2021 men's world boxing championships

- India lost the hosting rights of the **2021 men's world boxing championship** to **Serbia** after the **International Boxing association** alleged non-payment of host fee by the national federation, which claimed that AIBA "acted in haste".
- The Boxing Federation of India acknowledged the delay but blamed it on "procedural complications" arising out of the AIBA's failure to resolve "issues" with regards to the account in which the money was to be transferred.
- The payment of what is estimated to be \$4 million was due to be made on December 2 last year.
- After New Delhi didn't fulfill its obligations to pay host fee as mentioned in the Host City Agreement terms, AIBA has terminated the contract. Therefore, India would have to pay a cancellation penalty of \$500000, the AIBA stated in a statement.

### Revision Points

Organization	Headquarters	Key Person
All India Football Federation	Dwarka, Delhi	Praful Patel
Union of European Football Association	Nyon, Switzerland	Aleksander Ceferin
United Nations	New York, USA	António Guterres
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	Washington D.C.	Kristalina Georgieva
NASSCOM	New Delhi	Rishad Premji
Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)	Bengaluru	K Sivan
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	Washington DC, USA	James Frederick "Jim" Bridenstine
World Economic Forum (WEF)	Cologny, Switzerland	Klaus Schwab
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	Beijing, China	Jin Liqun
World Bank	Washington D.C, USA	David Malpass
Asian Development Bank	Mandaluyong, Philippines	Masatsugu Asakawa
International Cricket Council (ICC)	Dubai, UAE	Manu Sawhney
Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)	New Delhi	DilipChenoy
International Hockey Federation (FIH)	Lausanne, Switzerland	Narinder Batra
United Nations Childrens' Fund (UNICEF)	New York, USA	Henrietta H. Fore
World Health Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	Tedros Adhanom
World Intellectual Property Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	Francis Gurry
National Book Trust	New Delhi	Govind Prasad Sharma
Defence Research Development	New Delhi	Sateesh Reddy

Organization		
Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)	Bengaluru	Walchand Hirachand (Founder)
United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization	Paris	Audrey Azoulay
Indian Council of Medical Research	New Delhi	Balram Bhargava
World Trade Organization (WTO)	Geneva	Roberto Azevedo
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC)	Vienna	Ghada Fathi Waly
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	Brussels	Air Chief Marshal Stuart Peach
SAARC Development Fund	Thimphu	Sunil Motiwal
National Company Law Tribunal	New Delhi	Justice SJ Mukhopadhaya

### Important Peoples' in News

#### Bob Weighton 112-year-old officially recognised as world's oldest man

- A Hampshire resident **Bob Weighton** has been officially recognised as **the world's oldest man** by **Guinness World Records**. Bob Weighton, from the UK, has been officially confirmed as the oldest person living (male) at **112 Years and 1 day** as of 30 March 2020.
- He became the latest man to earn the Guinness World Records designation after **Japanese man Chitetsu Watanabe** passed away on Feb. 23 at **112 years and 355 days old**.
- **Japanese woman Kane Tanaka** is currently the **world's oldest living person** after turning 117 in January.
- The oldest male in history is Japan's Jiroemon Kimura, who lived to be 116 years and 54 days old before dying in 2013.

#### Kobe Bryant inducted into NBA Hall of Fame

- **Kobe Bryant** will be **posthumously** inducted into the **Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame**.
- The other members of the Hall's Class of 2020 will be Tim Duncan, Kevin Garnett, Eddie Sutton, Rudy Tomjanovich, Tamika Catchings, Kim Mulkey, Barbara Stevens and Patrick Baumann.
- Kobe Bryant, 41 was killed in a helicopter crash in January 2020.

#### Former Australia Test spinner Stephen O'Keefe retires from 1st class cricket

- Former **Australia Test spinner Stephen O'Keefe** has retired from **first class cricket** after being omitted from New South Wales' list of contracted players for the next domestic season.
- The 35-year-old left-arm, who took 35 wickets in nine tests — including 12 in a match against India at Pune in 2017 — confirmed his first class career is over.
- O'Keefe took 16 wickets at 22.25 as New South Wales won the Sheffield Shield four-day title last season, the most by any spinner in the competition.

## England all-rounder Ben Stokes was named the 'Leading Cricketer in the World' in the 2020 edition of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack

- The **28-year-old played** a leading role in England's 50-over World Cup victory at home last year while his brilliant unbeaten knock of 135 helped the side to a thrilling one-wicket win over Australia in the third Ashes test at Headingley.
- Andrew Flintoff was the last English player to win the award in 2005.
- Before Stokes, India captain **Virat Kohli** had won the award three straight times.
- Australian all-rounder **Ellyse Perry** was named as the leading woman player in the world while she also found a place as one of Wisden's five Cricketers of the Year.
- England pace bowler Jofra Archer, Australians Pat Cummins and Marnus Labuschagne and Essex off-spinner Simon Harmer were the others.
- Perry scored the highest runs and took the most wickets as Australia successfully retained their Women's Ashes title against England last year.

## Sharath Kamal becomes highest-ranked Indian table tennis player

- Ace paddler **Achanta Sharath Kamal** surpassed compatriot **Gnanasekaran Sathiyan** to become the highest-ranked **Indian men table tennis player** after he grabbed **31st position** in the latest senior men's rankings released by International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF).
- Riding on the title winning performance at the **Oman Open** last month, Sharath has taken a leap of seven spots to claim the 31st position.
- Young rising paddler **Mudit Dani** also made notable progress in the rankings as he broke into the Top-200 for the first time in his career.
- After good performance in the recent events, Dani took a jump of nine places to claim the 200th position while Harmeet Desai (72), Anthony Amalraj (100) and Manav Thakkar (139) are the other Indian paddlers who have positioned themselves in the first 200.
- Meanwhile, in the senior women's rankings, Manika Batra is at the 63rd spot while Sutirtha Mukharjee at 95th, breaking into the top 100.

## Middle-distance runner Jhuma Khatun banned for four years by AIU after testing positive for banned substance

- **Middle distance runner Jhuma Khatun** has been banned for four years by the **Athletics Integrity Unit** of the world governing body for testing positive for a banned substance in a nearly two-year-old doping case which the NDTL had failed to detect.
- The 31-year-old Khatun's dope sample collected during the National Inter-State Championships in June 2018 in Guwahati returned negative when it was tested by the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL).
- Khatun had won a bronze each in 1500m and 5000m in that Guwahati meet.
- The **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** then decided to test the sample of Khatun at its Montreal Laboratory in **Canada** and it returned positive for dehydrochloromethyl testosterone.
- Khatun, who was also a part of the 2011 Asian Championships 4x400m relay race silver-winning quarter.

## Former Pakistan skipper Sana Mir announces retirement from international cricket

- **Former Pakistan women's skipper Sana Mir** announced her **retirement** from international cricket, ending a 15 year long illustrious career.
- Mir featured in 226 international matches for Pakistan, including 137 as captain from 2009 to 2017.

- The right-handed batter made her ODI debut against Sri Lanka in Karachi in December 2005, while her last ODI was against Bangladesh in Lahore in November 2019.
- With 151 ODI wickets in 120 ODIs, she shares the fourth position on the all-time list with Anisa Mohammed of the West Indies.
- She is one of the nine women cricketers to have taken 100 wickets and scored 1,000 runs in ODIs.
- The 34-year-old cricketer is currently **ranked 9th and 41st in the ICC's ODI and T20I bowlers' lists**, respectively.

#### Olympic Medallist Mathias Boe Announces Retirement from International Badminton

- **Denmark's ace doubles exponent Mathias Boe, a silver medallist at the 2012 London Olympics and 2013 World Championships** announced his retirement from **international badminton**.
- In his career spanning two decades, the 39-year-old Danish shuttler has partnered the likes of Michael Jensen, Thomas Hovgaard and Michael Lamp, before striking up a successful long-term combination with Carsten Mogensen.
- Mathias was also part of the team that won the Thomas Cup in 2016. They were frequently on the podium at the Superseries events and also won the coveted All England (2011, 2015) twice apart from three straight World Superseries Finals (2010, 2011, 2012) titles.
- The partnership split in March 2019, after which Mathias combined with Mads-Conrad Petersen.

#### PCB bans Umar Akmal for 3 years

- **Pakistan's wicket-keeper batsman Umar Akmal** was banned for three years for failing to **'report corrupt approaches'** ahead of Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2020.
- The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) stated the ban was imposed by its Disciplinary Panel Chairman Justice (retired) Fazal-e-Miran Chauhan, who held a hearing.
- The **Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)** had suspended the 29-year-old in February pending an anti-corruption investigation by its disciplinary panel.
- The PCB charged him for two breaches of Article 2.4.4 of its Anti-Corruption Code in two unrelated incidents in February this year ahead of the Pakistan Super League -- a T20 event also featuring international cricketers.

### Important Mergers and Acquisitions

#### Hindustan Unilever completes the GlaxoSmithKline merger

- **Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL)** has completed the merger of **GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSKCH India)**.
- HUL has received all the regulatory approvals along with the National Company Law Tribunal for the merger.
- The merger of GSK CH India with HUL will be on a basis of an exchange ratio of 4.39 HUL shares for each GSK CH India share, implying a total equity value of Rs 31,700 crore for 100 per cent of GSK CH India.
- The board of HUL also approved acquiring the popular health drink brand Horlicks for India from GSK for a consideration of Euro 375.6 million (Rs 3,045 crore).
- With this, popular milk supplement brands Horlicks, Boost and Maltova will now come under HUL.

#### Apple acquires weather app Dark Sky, to shut down Android version in June

- **Apple** has acquired popular weather app **Dark Sky** and will shut down its Android and Wear OS versions in July. However, terms of the deal was not disclosed.

- According to Dark Sky, service to existing users and subscribers will continue until July 1, at which point the app will be shut down. Subscribers who are still active at that time will receive a refund. The Android app of Dark Sky has been downloaded more than a million times on playstore.
- There will be no changes to Dark Sky for iOS at this time. It will continue to be available for purchase in the App Store. The Dark Sky website will remain active beyond that time in support of API and iOS App customers.
- Our API service for existing customers is not changing, but we will no longer accept new signups. The API will continue to function through the end of 2021.

#### CCI approves acquisition of GMR Kamalanga Energy Limited by JSW Energy Limited

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) approves the acquisition by **JSW Energy Limited** of **GMR Kamalanga Energy Limited**, under **Section 31(1) of the Competition Act, 2002**, in its meeting held through video conferencing.
- The proposed combination envisages the acquisition of the entire (i.e., 100%) shareholding of the Target by the Acquirer.
- The **JSW Energy Limited**(also through its subsidiaries) is engaged in power generation, power transmission, power trading, coal mining and power equipment manufacturing. Presently, the It has a power generation capacity of 4,541 MW comprising of portfolio of thermal (3,140 MW), hydro (1,391 MW) and solar (10 MW).
- The **GMR Kamalanga Energy Limited** is engaged in generation of power through its coal based thermal power plant at Kamalanga village, Dhenkanal district, Odisha.

#### CCI approves Hitachi's stake-buy in ABB's power grid arm

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** has approved acquisition of **80.1 per cent stake** in **ABB Management Holding AG** by **Hitachi Ltd**. ABB Management will hold the entire power grid business of ABB.
- Japanese firm **Hitachi** is the parent company of the Hitachi group of companies and is active in business segments, including IT solution, energy solution, industry solution, mobility solution, and smart life solution.
- Swiz firm ABB is involved in development, engineering, manufacturing and sale of products, systems and projects in the power grids sector, fair trade regulator noted.

#### People's Bank of China now owns 1.01 pc stake in HDFC

- The **People's Bank of China (PBOC)** has bought **1.01 per cent stake** in the **Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC)**.
- PBOC held 1.75 crore shares of HDFC during the quarter that ended in March. However, PBOC already owned 0.8 percent earlier.
- As per norms, businesses are required to disclose shareholding of over 1 percent at the end of every quarter. The disclosure has been made now by PBOC because the ownership has hit the 1 percent regulatory threshold.
- Due to the coronavirus crisis, HDFC shares fell nearly 39.87 per cent this year from a high of Rs 2,493 to a low of Rs 1,499. The stock rallied 13.54 per cent last week to close at Rs 1,702. Foreign portfolio investors hold a 70.88 per cent stake in the company.

#### Apple and Google collaborate on COVID-19 contact tracing tech

- **Apple** and **Google** have announced a joint effort to enable the use of Bluetooth technology to help governments and health agencies reduce the spread of the new coronavirus, with user privacy and security central to the design.
- Apple and Google are launching a comprehensive solution that includes **application programming interfaces (APIs)** and operating system-level technology to assist in enabling **contact tracing**.
- These official apps will be available for users to download via their respective app stores.

- The coming months, Apple and Google will work to enable a broader Bluetooth-based contact tracing platform by building this functionality into the underlying platforms, they informed.
- Contact tracing can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and can be done without compromising user privacy.
- Since COVID-19 can be transmitted through close proximity to affected individuals, public health officials have identified contact tracing as a valuable tool to help contain its spread.
- As part of this partnership, Google and Apple are releasing draft technical documentation including Bluetooth and cryptography specifications and framework documentation.

#### **CCI approves Emerald Sage Investment's stake buy in Apollo Tyres**

- The Competition Commission has approved acquisition of **9.93 per cent** stake in **Apollo Tyres** by **Emerald Sage Investment**.
- The proposed transaction relates to subscription of **10,80,00,000** compulsorily convertible preference shares of Rs 100 each of Apollo Tyres by Emerald.
- Emerald is a Mauritius-based investment holding company, while Apollo Tyres is engaged in manufacturing and sale of automotive.

#### **TVS Motor Company acquires Norton Motorcycles for Rs 153 crore**

- **TVS Motor Company** has acquired **Britain's Norton Motorcycles** for **GBP16 million (Rs 153.12 crore)**. One of the most iconic British motorcycle brands of all time, Norton Motorcycles manufactures popular products like V4 RR, Dominator, Commando 961 Cafe Racer MK II and Commando 961 Sport MK II.
- Norton Motorcycles was founded by James Lansdowne Norton in 1898 in Birmingham, England. TVS Motor Company is one of the largest two-wheeler manufacturers of India.
- While Rothschild and Co were the financial advisors of TVS Motor Company for the acquisition, the legal advice for the transaction was provided to the two-wheeler manufacturer by Khaitan & Co, and Slaughter and May.

#### **Facebook buys 9.9% stake in Reliance Jio for Rs 43,574 crore in largest tech FDI**

- **Facebook** has bought a **9.9% stake in Reliance Jio** for **\$5.7 billion (Rs 43,574 crore)**, the telecom unit of **Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)** in a deal that gives the social media giant a firm foothold in a fast-growing massive market and helps the Indian oil-to-telecom conglomerate to significantly cut debt.
- The deal values Jio at **Rs 4.62 lakh crore (\$65.95 billion)**.
- RIL stated this is the largest investment for a minority stake by a technology company anywhere in the world and the largest FDI in the technology sector in India.

#### **Federal Bank to acquire additional stake in IDBI Federal Life Insurance**

- **Federal Bank** stated its Board has approved in principle purchase of additional stake of up to 4 per cent in the equity capital of **IDBI Federal Life Insurance Co Ltd (IFLIC)** from **IDBI Bank**.
- This purchase is subject to price finalization and all relevant regulatory approvals, the Bank stated in a regulatory filing.
- The private sector bank currently holds a 26 per cent stake in IFLIC, making it an Associate of the Bank. Post purchase, its total stake may increase up to 30 per cent.
- IDBI Bank has 48 per cent stake in IFLIC. Since Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has 51 per cent majority stake in IDBI Bank, the latter is looking to sell its entire stake in IFLIC. Current insurance regulations do not allow LIC to hold more than 10 per cent stake in another insurer, either directly or indirectly.

#### **HDFC acquires 6.43% stake in debt-trapped Reliance Capital**

- **HDFC** stated it has acquired **6.43 per cent stake** in debt-trapped **Reliance Capital** by invoking pledged shares.
- These shares were acquired pursuant to invocation of pledge by security trustee on behalf of the corporation, which was pledged against a loan given by the lender in its normal course of business, HDFC Ltd stated in a regulatory filing.
- The company acquired 25.27 crore shares of Rs.10 each, it stated, adding that the total value of these shares are Rs.252 crore.

#### Revision points

Company	Merging Company
Hindustan Unilever Ltd	GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
Apple	Dark Sky
GMR Kamalanga Energy Limited	JSW Energy Limited
ABB Management Holding AG	Hitachi Ltd
People's Bank of China (1.01%)	Housing Development Finance Corporation
Apollo Tyres (9.93%)	Emerald Sage Investment
TVS Motor Company	Norton Motorcycles
Federal Bank	IDBI Federal Life Insurance
Facebook (9.9%)	Reliance Jio
HDFC (6.43%)	Reliance Capital

#### Important Web Portals and Mobile Apps

##### **Aarogya Setu': Govt launches coronavirus tracker app**

- The Central government launched an app called **Aarogya Setu** to help people **track coronavirus infections more accurately**.
- The app was launched by the **National Informatics Centre** that comes **under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- The App, called '**AarogyaSetu**' joins Digital India for the health and well-being of every Indian. It will enable people to assess themselves the risk for their catching the Corona Virus infection.
- The app uses cutting edge Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence to determine whether a person is in the risk of contracting a COVID-19 infection.
- The AarogyaSetu app is available in eleven languages.
- The App's design ensures privacy-first. The personal data collected by the App is encrypted using state-of-the-art technology and stays secure on the phone till it is needed for facilitating medical intervention.

##### **Geo-Fencing App To Locate Quarantine Violators**

- **Geo-fencing** is a location-based service in which an app or other software uses GPS, RFID, Wi-Fi or cellular data to trigger a pre-programmed action when a mobile device or RFID tag enters or exits a virtual boundary set up around a geographical location.
- The Centre is using powers under the Indian Telegraph Act to "fetch information" from telecom companies every 15 minutes to track COVID-19 cases across the country.

- The States have been asked to seek the approval of their Home Secretaries under the provisions of **Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, for the specified mobile phone numbers to request the DoT to provide information by email or SMS in case of violation of “geo-fencing”.

#### **IBM offers 'Watson Assistant for Citizens' to quickly address covid-19 queries**

- **IBM** is offering its AI platform '**Watson Assistant for Citizens**' free of cost for **at least 90 days**, which will provide reliable information on covid-19 related queries.
- The platform that brings together Watson Assistant, Natural Language Processing, and AI search capabilities, that help in understanding and responding to common questions about coronavirus.
- IBM developed the 'Watson Assistant for Citizens' to provide an AI-powered virtual agent that helps governments deliver accurate information to their citizens without overwhelming contact centres where human agents are needed to help those who truly need them.
- '**Watson Assistant for Citizens**' leverages currently available data from external sources which include the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other government sources for prevention & treatment related guidance, citizen welfare schemes in India, as well as global resources such as World Health Organization (WHO) and US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC).
- Watson Assistant for Citizens is available in **English and Spanish and 11 other languages**.
- In India, Watson Assistant will respond to answer queries in **English and Hindi**.

#### **AICTE comes out with unique helpline portal to support students during lockdown**

- All India Council for Technical Education, AICTE has come out with a unique MHRD AICTE COVID-19 Student Helpline Portal to address the issues. The website with URL <https://helpline.aicte-india.org> was launched by Minister for Human Resource Development Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.
- The portal is essentially to connect those who are willing to provide help with those who need help. The nature of support includes accommodation, food, on line classes, attendance, examinations, scholarships, health, transport, harassment etc.

#### **Telangana Govt To Deploy India's First Automated Covid-19 Live Monitoring App**

- The **Telangana government** has announced the deployment of the country's first automated '**COVID-19 Monitoring System App**'. This app is going to help users in identifying, undertaking live surveillance, tracking, monitoring, and providing real-time analytics.
- The COVID-19 Monitoring System App has been devised by early-stage start-up, Vera Smart Healthcare in order to deal with the pandemic.
- This app will enable live surveillance, monitoring, tracking, reporting, and essential bulletins related to this deadly disease. The app uses analytics which facilitates assurance to the stakeholders by providing the facts and figures at their fingertips.

#### **Chhattisgarh Police use app 'Rakhsa Sarv'to keep an eye on home quarantined people**

- Police in **Chhattisgarh's Janjgir-Champa district** have created a **mobile application** to keep tabs on those violating the home quarantine order.
- The police, with the help of Noida-based **startup Mobcoder**, developed the app '**Rakhsa Sarv**', which enables them to track the quarantined people through Google Map. Details of the home-quarantined people are being fed in the app's dashboard.

- Police teams have started installing the application in the phones of those kept under home quarantine and so far, over 50 per cent of such people have been covered.
- The quarantined person will have to upload a selfie in the app every hour which will specify his/her location.

#### **Arunachal Pradesh govt launches COVIDCARE app to fight COVID-19**

- **Arunachal Pradesh** government has launched a newly developed app called **COVIDCARE**, in an effort to fight COVID-19.
- This app has been developed for those people who are quarantined, asymptomatic or COVID-19 patients to self-report their health status, including body temperature and vital symptoms and in case of emergency, the patient will be able to call for help through the app itself.

#### **Centre launches online training portal on MHRD's DIKSHA platform for frontline COVID-19 warriors**

- The **Government of India** has launched a training module for the management of COVID-19 named "**Integrated Government Online training**" (iGOT) portal on **Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD) DIKSHA platform** for the capacity building of frontline workers to handle the COVID-19 pandemic efficiently.
- Courses on iGOT have been launched for doctors, nurses, paramedics, hygiene workers, technicians, Auxiliary Nursing Midwives (ANMs), State Government officers, civil defence officers, various police organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme, Indian Red Cross Society, Bharat Scouts and Guides and other volunteers.
- The portal website link is <https://igot.gov.in/igot/>.
- The platform will provide the training module on flexitime and on site basis so that the COVID response can be delivered at scale for the workforce needed to tackle the pandemic.

#### **MoHUA Launches Revised Version of Swachhata App to Handle Queries Specific to COVID 19**

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** announced the launch of a revised version of the existing **Swachhata-MoHUA App**, at a video conference (VC) held with all States, Union Territories (UTs) and cities, under the Chairmanship of **Shri Durga Shanker Mishra**, Secretary – MoHUA, on the COVID 19 crisis.
- The Swachhata-MoHUA App, a highly popular grievance redressal tool for citizens under the ambit of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) already has over 1.7 Crore+ urban users across the country. This app has now been modified and strengthened further in order to enable citizens to get their COVID-related complaints also redressed by their respective ULBs.
- The revised version of the Swachhata App essentially leverages the popularity and huge user base of the app to better support citizens during this COVID pandemic. However, the addition of these new categories has no impact on the existing categories of the App and citizens may continue to post their grievances in either of the categories.
- The pilot version of the revised version of the App had been shared with select States and cities earlier. Basis the feedback, the same is being launched across India. The announcement was met with appreciation by the State Mission Directors and ULB representatives at the VC who looked forward to leveraging the Swachhata-MoHUA App for redressing citizen complaints related to COVID-19.
- **Swachhata App** serves as an effective digital tool enabling citizens to play an active role in the Swachhata of their cities and increase accountability on the part of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

#### **Newly launched 'SafeSeniors' app to monitor senior citizens amid Covid-19 crisis**

- India's retail company for **senior citizens, Seniority**, has collaborated with **RPG Life Sciences** to launch the "**SafeSeniors**" app, a predictive analysis tool designed to primarily help early identification of COVID 19 risk amongst the elderly.
- The tool has been developed in consultation with the leading experts in the areas of infectious diseases, community medicine, clinical pharmacology, and Covid-19 management.
- The SafeSeniors tool has been specially developed to help in early identification of Covid-19 risk amongst senior citizens. Seniors and their dear ones are encouraged to enter their vital parameters, pre-existing medical conditions, travel & social exposure history and key symptoms such as fever, dry cough, etc. on a daily basis.

#### Union HRD Minister launches a web-portal YUKTI in New Delhi

- **Union Minister for HRD** Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" has launched a web-portal **YUKTI (Young India Combating COVID with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation)** in New Delhi.
- It is a unique portal with a dashboard to monitor and record the efforts and initiatives of MHRD.
- The portal will cover various initiatives and efforts of the institutions in academics, research especially related to COVID-19, social initiatives by institutions and the measures taken for the betterment of the well-being of the students.
- The portal will cover both qualitative and quantitative parameters for effective delivery of services to the academic community at large.
- The portal will also allow various institutions to share their strategies for various challenges which are there because of the unprecedented situation of COVID-19 and other future initiatives.
- This portal will give inputs for better planning and will enable Ministry of HRD to monitor effectively its activities for coming six months.

#### National Agriculture Market portal e-NAM to Complete four Years

- The pan-India Agriculture trading portal **e-NAM** will be completing **four years** of implementation.
- e-NAM was an innovative initiative in agricultural marketing to enhance farmers accessibility digitally to multiple number of markets & buyers and to bring transparency in trade transactions with the intent to improve price discovery mechanism, quality commensurate price realization and also to develop the concept of **One Nation One Market** for agriculture produce.
- e-NAM was launched by Prime Minister in 21 mandis on **14th April, 2016** which has now reached 585 mandis across 16 States and 02 UTs.
- More than 1.66 crore farmers and 1.28 Lakh traders registered on e-NAM platform. Farmers are free to register on e-NAM portal and they are uploading their produce for sale online to the traders across all e-NAM mandis and traders can bid for the lots available for sale on e-NAM from any location.
- "**Farmers friendly**" features such as Advance registration of the lot through app which in turn will reduce waiting time for farmers at gate entry of the mandi and will bring huge efficiency and will facilitate smooth Arrival recording at Gate, Farmers can now see the assaying report **On The Go**, Farmers can see **the progress of bids** for their lot being traded, **through mobile** and farmers can also get **the real time information on prices** in nearby mandis. **Electronic weighing scales** have been provided to accurately weigh the commodities of farmers after bidding on e-NAM platform to bring transparency in weighing, **Payment to farmers by traders** now can be done through mobile phone using **BHIM payment facility**.

- For traders the additional OTG (On the Go) features have been added such as **Buyers bidding from anywhere even without physically present** in the mandi, **e-NAM shopping Cart facility** in Trader login, **single e-payment transaction features** for multiple Invoices/ Bunching of multiple invoices, automatic discount/ rebate on e-Payment/ Discount to traders during e-payment, online registration for unified **trading license** etc.

#### Ministry of Tourism launches "DekhoApnaDesh" webinar series

- The **ministry of tourism** was launching the **Dekho Apna Desh webinar series**.
- The webinar series will provide information on the many destinations and the 'depth' and 'expanse' of the culture and heritage of India. The first webinar on the history of Delhi and was titled "**City of Cities- Delhi's Personal Diary**".
- The webinar will be available on the ministry's social media handles- IncredibleIndia on Instagram and Facebook.

#### 'Kisan Rath' app to help farmers transport their farm produce

- **Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar** launched a farmer-friendly mobile application **Kisan Rath** to facilitate farmers and traders in searching vehicles for primary and secondary transportation of agriculture and horticulture produce.
- **Primary transportation** would include movement from farm to grain markets, FPO collection centre and warehouses, etc. **Secondary transportation** will include movement from grain markets to intra-state and inter-state mandis, processing units, railway station, warehouses, and wholesalers, etc.
- This app facilitates farmers and traders in identifying the right mode of transportation for the movement of farm produce ranging from food grain like cereal, coarse cereal, pulses, etc., fruits and vegetables, oilseeds, spices, fiber crops, flowers, bamboo, log and minor forest produce, coconuts, etc.
- This mobile app will be made available in **eight languages in the Android version** initially and is ready for pan-India use

#### Chhattisgarh Govt Launches Website For Home Delivery Of Fruits, Vegetables Amid Lockdown

- **Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel** inaugurated the online delivery website '**Cghaat**' to provide home delivery of fruits and vegetables during the extended lockdown phase.
- The website '**cghaat.in**', has been developed by Chhattisgarh government's agency Chips. The fruit and vegetable vendors interested in providing services through this portal can register online and start providing home delivery against online orders placed as soon as they receive Collector's permission. This service is available free of charge to vendors.
- The service has first been made available in **Raipur city**, but will soon be extended to other big cities in the state. The portal will come in to help people in maintaining physical distancing and will reduce the crowding at the shops.
- Recently Chhattisgarh's janjgir-champa district police created app '**rakhsa sarv**' to keep an eye on home quarantined people

#### Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan launches 'COVID India Seva' to address citizens' queries

- **Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan** launched '**COVID India Seva**', an interactive platform for citizen engagement on coronavirus.
- This initiative is aimed at enabling transparent e-governance delivery in real-time and answering citizen queries swiftly, at scale, especially in crisis situations like the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- The channel **@CovidIndiaSeva** is being hosted on **Twitter Seva**, will benefit citizens to find immediate solution to their health problems. They can get updates on the measures being taken by the government to prevent the spread of corona infection and information about health services.

- The platform is a multi-lingual platform, where Hindi is used as the second most language after English. It will also benefit the government reach out to a large number of users and answer their queries that in turn further help reduce any Covid-19 related misinformation on Twitter.

#### **MoRTH launches dashboard on its website to provide 'dhabas and repair shops' details**

- **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** has created a **dashboard link** on its website for providing list and details of **Dhabas and Truck repair shops** available across the country by various organisations like NHA, States, Oil Marketing companies.
- The list can be accessed at <https://morth.nic.in/dhabas-truck-repair-shops-opened-during-covid-19>.
- This is intended to facilitate the truck / cargo drivers and cleaners in their movement while traveling between different places of the country for delivering required goods.
- National Highway Authority of India's centralized call number **1033** has also been activated to answer calls and provide information about the dhabas and repair shops along National Highways.

#### **Pune's mobile App 'Saiyam' tracks home quarantined citizens**

- A mobile application named **Saiyam** has been developed by the **Pune Municipal Corporation** under Smart Cities Mission to effectively track the home-quarantined citizens and ensure that they are staying in the home.
- **Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry** stated that, City administration has taken administrative measures complemented by technology solutions to monitor home quarantined citizens. The city administration has appointed dedicated teams for five zones to conduct a follow-up with people under home quarantine on a daily basis.
- The teams will check on people who have recently returned from international trips and those discharged after treatment for COVID-19.
- The teams will also check if those under home quarantine have downloaded the **Saiyam Mobile** Application.
- The Mobile Application has GPS tracking so that whenever quarantined citizens leave their homes, City Administration gets informed and the local ward or the local police station gets informed. The Ministry stated, all the Home Quarantined citizens are given the mandate to download the app and install it.
- These identified citizens are advised to keep the GPS feature on the device always switched-on and the mobile device should be switched-on throughout the 24 hours, during the quarantine period.

#### **Karnataka govt launches "Apthamitra" helpline and app to fight COVID-19**

- The **Karnataka government** launched "**Apthamitra**" helpline with an exclusive **toll free number and a mobile app**, aimed at providing required medical advice and guidance for those in need.
- The help line and app was launched by Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa.
- If anyone has symptoms of coronavirus, they can call the helpline from their home, get medical advice or assistance and get their doubts cleared. Based on the symptoms, an expert team of doctors will advice on what to do next.
- According to the department, the 'Apthamitra' helpline will work from 8 AM to 8 PM, with helpline Centers at six locations in Bengaluru (four centers), Mysore and Mangalore (Bantwal) with total of 300 seat capacity are being set up.
- This entire Solution is owned by **Health and Family Welfare Department** and **State Disaster Management Authority**.
- The system works under the aegis of **NASSCOM**, Bengaluru.
- The Digital Mobile app and the back end CRM system have been developed by Infosys BPM (the subsidiary of Infosys Ltd)

#### **Union HRD Minister launched VidyaDaan 2.0 on DIKSHA used by CBSE,NCERT to strengthen e-learning content**

- Govt of India has launched a national program **VidyaDaan 2.0**, for inviting e-learning Content contributions. VidyaDaan 2.0 is a common national program to develop and contribute e-learning content and a chance to be recognised nationally.
- Due to the spread of Covid-19, education of students across schools is impacted everywhere. Traditional ways of teaching and learning are being rapidly augmented with online methods.
- It is the right time and opportunity to strengthen the e-learning content for school education on DIKSHA and leverage its potential used by all students and teachers of **CBSE, NCERT** and 30 states/UTs which have already adopted DIKSHA.
- The programme brings together academicians and organisations to develop and contribute fun and engaging e-learning content aligned to the curriculum.
- The content will be monitored by a panel of academic experts and released for use on the DIKSHA app to help millions of children across the country continue learning anytime and anywhere.
- The standardised templates available on VidyaDaan 2.0 via a content contribution tool will also help in creating a uniform structure ensuring easy accessibility.

#### **App that warns about COVID-19 containment zones, filters fake news developed by IIIT-Delhi**

- Researchers at **IIIT-Delhi** have developed an app which warns people about a **coronavirus containment zone** nearby and helps them check whether a news item about the pandemic is **genuine or fake**.
- The **WashKaro app**, developed by professor Ponnurangam Kumaraguru and Dr Tavpritesh Sethi of the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT-Delhi) along with five students, is currently available for android platforms.
- The research team had also presented the app at the **World Health Conference** in **Geneva** on April 8 through video conferencing.
- The app delivers government advisories from official pages and contains a Symptom Tracker (based upon WHO) for people to know if they are safe.

#### **CISF launches "e-office" app for movement of files**

- An e-office application, that enables movement of files and documents without physical touch, has been launched for usage in the 1.62 lakh personnel-strong Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to prevent coronavirus infection.
- The application called "**e-karyalay**" (**electronic office**) has been designed by the in-house technical team of the force.
- "This application has been hosted at CISF cloud with all security arrangements in place to safeguard the data," CISF spokesperson Assistant Inspector General (AIG) Hemendra Singh stated.
- As the government has only allowed officers above the rank of deputy secretary to go office and have only one-third of the manpower below this rank on a given day at work, the app will ease the work load.
- Also, it will enable officials to work from home, another official stated.
- The CISF is the national civil aviation security force with 63 airports under its cover and it also guards the Delhi Metro and other vital infrastructure in the aerospace and nuclear domain.

#### **Kerala (IIITM-K) Have Developed an AI-Based Search Engine For COVID-19 Research**

- **Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management - Kerala (IIITM-K)** has developed an **AI Semantic search engine** to enable researchers to get deeper insights into scientific studies, especially when they need to find an early solution to the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a large set of complex scientific information.
- Named '**www.vilokana.in**', which in Sanskrit means 'finding out', the search engine is developed by a team led by **A.P. James**, Professor at Centre for Artificial General Intelligence and Neuromorphic Systems (neuro GI), IIITM-K.

- The search engine will guide the researchers to the right information very fast. This makes easy the contextual search of information from the vast domain of scientific literature, which is a difficult problem faced by scientists and common people to get deeper insights into scientific studies.

#### AP launches pharmacy app for surveillance on cold, fever patients

- **Andhra Pradesh** Government began **tracking patients** who could be suffering from cold and fever.
- It has launched a **customised mobile application** for pharmacies across the state who report details of people who buy medicines for cold, cough and fever.
- Every pharmacist in the State is expected to download the app and register the details of customers who buy general medicines for the cold/cough/fever.
- The objective behind the app is to monitor any increase in incidence of cold and fever so that the patients can be tracked. This works as an additional pre-cautionary measure simultaneous to regular sample testing being done, stated senior health department official.
- Andhra Pradesh now tops the number of sample tests conducted per million population in the country.

#### Revision Points

Applications/Web portals	Launched By
Aarogya Setu, Geo Fencing	Government of India
Watson Assistant for Citizens	IBM
MHRD AICTE Covid-19 Student	All India Council for Technical Education
COVID-19 Monitoring System App	Telangana
Rakhsa Sarv	Chhattisgarh Police
COVIDCARE App	Arunachal Pradesh
Swachhata-MoHUA App	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
SafeSeniors	Seniority
YUKTI	Union Minister for HRD Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank"
Dekho Apna Desh	Ministry of Tourism
Kisan Rath	Narendra Singh Tomar
Cghaat.in	Chhattisgarh govt
COVID India Seva	Harsh Vardhan
Saiyam	Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry
Apthamitra	Karnataka govt
VidyaDaan 2.0	Union HRD Minister
e-office (e-karyalay)	CISF
WashKaro App	IIT Delhi
'www.vilokana.in'	IIITM-Kerala

#### Important Obituaries

Name	Field
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Arjun Dev	Educationist and Historian
Maria Teresa	Spanish Princess (Corona Virus complications)
Andrew Jack	Actor (Ematt in "Stars Wars" films)
Philip Anderson	A Nobel Prize-winning physicist
Vincent Marzello	Actor
Gita Ramjee	Virologist(Corona virus complications)
Nirmal Singh	Former "Hazoori Raagi" (Padma Shri Awardee)
Tony Lewis	Devisor of cricket's Duckworth-Lewis rain rules
Adam Schlesinger	Singer (Emmy Award Winner)
Passang Wangchuk Sona	Former minister & Deputy Speaker of Arunachal Pradesh
Bill Withers	Writer & Singer (3-time Grammy Award)
Rafael Callejas	Honduran ex-president
MK Arjunan	Malayalam Music Composer
Mahmoud Jibril	Former Interim Prime Minister, Libya
Bobby Mitchell	Pro Football Hall of Famer
Jock Edwards	Former New Zealand wicket-keeper
Peter Walker	Former England and Glamorgan County Cricket Club all-rounder
Bullet Prakash	Kannada comedy actor
Kalinga Sasi	Malayalam film and theatre actor
Roger Chappot	Former Swiss professional ice hockey player
Brahm Kanchibotla	Indian-American journalist
Honor Blackman	Actress (Well-known in Goldfinger movie)
Radomir Antic (Serbia)	Coach of Atletico Madrid, Real Madrid and Barcelona
Hazarilal Raghuwanshi	Former Madhya Pradesh minister (Congress Leader)
Shanti Hiranand Chawla	Hindustani classical singer (Padma Shree Awardee)
John Harcourt du Preez	Former South Africa spinner and Zimbabwe selector
Nobuhiko Obayashi	Japan's filmmaker
Stirling Moss	Former Formula One Racer
Peter Bonetti	Former Chelsea and England goalkeeper
M V Rajasekharan	Former Union Minister
Ashok Desai	Former Attorney General of India
Glenn Alfred Beckert	Former baseball player (America)
Doug Sanders (Peacock of the	Former Golfer (America)

Fairways)	
Zafar Sarfraz	Former Pakistan first-class cricketer
Walter D'Souza	Former Cricketer (Gujarat)
Ranjit chowdhry	Actor-Writer
Saharai Oram (Odisha)	Former Cabinet Minister & 5-time MLA
R V Bhuskute	Freedom Fighter
Luis Sepulveda	Chilean Writer
Abba Kyari	Chief of Staff to Nigeria's President
Laisenia Qarase	Former Prime Minister of Fiji
Rudratej Singh	President & CEO, BMW Group India
Usha Ganguly	Founder of the Rangakarmee group
Basanta Das	Former Rajya Sabha member from Odisha
Graeme Watson	Former Australian All-rounder
Ronojoy 'Ronny' Roy	Sports Photojournalist
James M. Beggs	Former NASA administrator
Bijay Mishra (Odisha)	Playwright & Lyricist
Devanand Konwar	Politician & Former Governor of Bihar, West Bengal, Tripura
Michael Robinson	Former Liverpool Striker
Irrfan Khan	Actor
Rishi Kapoor	Actor