

Weekly Current Affairs

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NATIONAL NEWS

1. India joined EU resolution of 61 countries at WHO meet seeking a probe into coronavirus crisis

- India is among 62 countries that have moved a proposal at the World Health Assembly to “identify the zoonotic source” of the coronavirus. China and the US are not part of the resolution.
- The proposal is part of a seven-page draft resolution moved by 35 countries and the 27-member European Union, and is likely to be taken up at the Assembly, which is the decision-making body of the WHO. The resolution is being backed by three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — UK, Russia and France — along with Japan, Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, South Africa and Turkey, among others.
- This is the first time India has taken a position in an international forum on the origin of the virus and the need for an independent evaluation of WHO’s response to the crisis.

2. Centre Approves Modified Project Report Of Ujh Dam In Jammu And Kashmir

- The centre has given approval to a modified detailed project report (DPR) of the Ujh Multipurpose Project (MPP) in Jammu and Kashmir at an estimated cost of Rs 9,167 crore.
- The Central Advisory Committee for consideration of techno-economic viability of major and medium irrigation, flood control and multipurpose project proposals accepted the project proposal subject to certain conditions.
- The proposal was approved keeping in view its strategic importance from Indus Waters Treaty angle for utilisation and regulation of waters flowing across the border.
- The modified Ujh MPP is located on river Ujh, one of the main tributaries of river Ravi, in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir. A 116.00 m high dam is proposed at the river with full reservoir level (FRL) at 608 m.

3. MoHUA Released Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities under Swachh Bharat mission

- On May 19, 2020, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs released star rating of garbage free cities for the year 2019-20.
- Around 5 cities were given 5-star rating. This includes Ambikapur, Surat, Rajkot, Mysuru, Indore and Navi Mumbai. The ministry had given 3-star rating to 65 cities and 1-star rating to 70 cities.
- The rating system was launched by the Ministry in 2018. This was launched to provide a mechanism to achieve Garbage free status. Also, such a rating system will motivate cities to achieve higher cleanliness. The rating mainly focuses on solid waste management.

4. Madhya Pradesh launches Charan Paduka initiative for migrant labourers

- In Madhya Pradesh, in a first of its kind of initiative, Charan Paduka campaign has been started for the migrant labourers passing through the state.
- Under this campaign, the migrant labourers going barefoot are being provided shoes and slippers to reduce their pain.
- The most notable thing is that this campaign is being conducted by the police at most places.
- Now this human initiative has spread in many cities of MP including Damoh, Umari and Sagar.
- Migrant labourers are also very happy with this initiative of the police.

5. Union Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan represents India at 73rd World Health Assembly

- Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan represent India at the 2-day World Health Assembly of the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO has announced that the 73rd World Health Assembly will be held virtually.
- The Health Assembly is held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Coronavirus will be the agenda of the meeting, which will be attended by all 194 WHO member states plus observers.

6. Punjab govt promulgates 'Punjab Good Conduct Prisoners Amendment Ordinance, 2020'

- Punjab government (govt) promulgated 'The Punjab Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Amendment Ordinance, 2020'. As per new provisions, the temporary release of the prisoners has been allowed beyond the maximum period of 16 weeks in a calendar year.
- The govt had earlier released around 3,000 undertrial prisoners on 6 week interim bail from various prisons across the state and the period of their release set to finish, the Government has now decided to extend the parole of convicts and interim bail of undertrial prisoners further by 6 weeks.
- The decision was taken by the Government panel, chaired by Justice Rakesh Kumar Jain of the Punjab and Haryana High Court who is also the Executive Chairman of Punjab State Legal Services Authority.

7. Centre reduces EPFO contributions from 12 percent to 10 percent from May to July this year

- The Centre has notified the reduction in statutory rate of contributions from 12 per cent to 10 per cent for wage months period from May to July, 2020 for all class of establishments covered under the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
- Earlier, the government had announced to reduce the rate as part of the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat package.
- As a result of reduction in statutory rate of contributions, the employee will have a higher take home pay and employers will also have their liabilities reduced by 2 percent of wages of the employees.

8. J&K promotes e-learning under Samagra Shiksha programme

- In Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), the Union territory (UT) administration has initiated a slew of measures under "Samagra Shiksha programme" to facilitate students with complete access to education through technological interventions and other viable means in wake of COVID-19 lockdown.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all educational institutes have been closed and in order to maintain the continuity of education delivery to students several steps are being taken by the UT Government which inter-alia included Radio Classrooms wherein Live Lectures are being broadcast daily between 2 to 4 P.M.

9. Cabinet approves "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana" for boosting fisheries sector

- The Cabinet in its meeting held today has approved the "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana - A scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India" with highest ever investment of Rs. 20050 crores in fisheries sector comprising of Central share of Rs. 9407 crore, State share of Rs 4880 crore and Beneficiaries contribution of Rs. 5763 crore. PMMSY will be implemented over a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 in all States/Union Territories. The aims and objectives of this Yojna are:
 - i. Harnessing of fisheries potential in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner
 - ii. Enhancing of fish production and productivity through expansion, intensification, diversification and productive utilization of land and water
 - iii. Modernizing and strengthening of value chain - post-harvest management and quality improvement
 - iv. Doubling fishers and fish farmers incomes and generation of employment
 - v. Enhancing contribution to Agriculture GVA and exports
 - vi. Social, physical and economic security for fishers and fish farmers
 - vii. Robust fisheries management and regulatory framework

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10. Railway's Most Powerful 12,000 HP Made in India Locomotive Begins Commercial Run

- The Indian Railways' most powerful 12000 HP Made in India locomotive made its maiden commercial run between Deen Dayal Upadhaya and Shivpur stations in Uttar Pradesh.
- Built by French company Alstom under the government's Make in India programme at the Railways' Madhepura factory in Bihar, these engines are the highest-powered locomotives that will run on Indian

rails. All 800 of these locos are being manufactured indigenously while they have been designed at the company's engineering centre in Bengaluru.

- The locomotive is capable of working on railway tracks with conventional OHE lines as well as on Dedicated Freight corridors with high rise OHE lines.
- The locomotive has air-conditioned driver cabs on either side.

11. More than 200 singers sing “JAYTU BHARATAM” song for Atma Nirbhar Bharat

- Legendary singer Lata Mangeskar has sung a song titled as JAYTU BHARATAM saluting the spirit of Atma Nirbhar Bharat.
- More than 200 singers have sung the song including Anuradha Paudwal, Kavita Krishnamurthy, Shaan, Udit Narayan, Pankaj Udas, Alka Yagini, Rekha, Asha Bhonsle, SP Balasubrahmanyam, Shankar Mahadevan, Sonu Nigam and Kailash Kher.

12. CCI approves acquisition of Emami Cement Limited by Nuvoco Vistas Corporation Limited

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) approves acquisition of 100% of the total issued and paid up share capital of Emami Cement Limited, on a fully diluted basis, by Nuvoco Vistas Corporation Limited.
- NVCL is a Nirma promoter group company and currently operates cement manufacturing units in the states of (i) Chhattisgarh, (ii) Jharkhand, (iii) West Bengal, (iv) Rajasthan and (v) Haryana. It is stated to be engaged in the businesses of manufacturing and sale of variety of grey cements including Portland Pozzolana cement, Portland Slag cement and Ordinary Portland cement. It is also engaged in the sale of certain other value-added products like construction chemicals, wall putty, and cover blocks.
- ECL is a part of the Emami group and owns and operates cement manufacturing units in the states of (i) West Bengal, (ii) Chhattisgarh, (iii) Bihar and (iv) Odisha. It is stated to be engaged in the manufacturing and sale of variety of grey cements including Portland Pozzolana cement, Portland Slag cement, Ordinary Portland cement and plain cement concrete i.e. composite cement. It also manufactures and sells small quantities of clinker and ground granulated blast furnace slag.

13. UP govt launches ‘Startup Fund’ to encourage youth for entrepreneurship

- Uttar Pradesh government has launched the ‘Uttar Pradesh Startup Fund’ to encourage the youth of the state for entrepreneurship.
- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath handed over the first installment of 15 crore rupees to Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) at a function in Lucknow.
- A MoU has been signed between the state government and SIDBI as a step in this direction, which will further strengthen the possibilities of job creation in the state.

14. OIL receives Environmental Clearance to exploration underneath Assam National Park

- On May 20, 2020, the major exploration by the Oil India Limited beneath the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park of Assam received environmental clearance. There were concerns that the project would affect the flora and fauna in the region. The park is the only region in India that supports feral horses.
- The Oil India Limited (OIL) has received environmental clearance from MoEFCC (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) to extend drilling and testing of hydrocarbons.
- The OIL is to implement extended reach drilling technology for which the company had obtained permission in 2016.
- The company will down carry out hydrocarbon exploration 1.5 km outside the demarcated area of the park. The company has been performing explorations in the region for more than 15 years.

15. Cabinet approved extension of Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana up to 31st March 2023

- Union Cabinet has approved extension of Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana, PMVVY for the welfare of and to enable old age income security for senior citizens.
- The scheme has been extended up to 31st March, 2023 for a further period of three years beyond 31st March 2020.
- Cabinet to allow initially an assured rate of return of 7.40 per cent per annum for the year 2020-21 per annum and thereafter to be reset every year. PMVVY is a social security scheme for senior citizens

intended to give an assured minimum pension to them based on an assured return on the purchase price or subion amount.

16. India becomes the Second Largest Manufacturer of PPE in the world

- India became the second largest producer of Personal Protective Equipment in the world. China is the leading producer of PPE in the world. The Ministry of Textiles has been taking several measures to maintain the quality of PPE alongside manufacturing.
- Initially India faced several challenges in increasing quality PPE products. This includes importing machines from China and also increasing prices. Apart from these, there were delays in imports and non-availability of domestic manufacturers. The above reasons made India turn indigenous in PPE production. This increased the production of PPE.

17. Chhattisgarh launches Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay scheme for Farmers

- The Chhattisgarh government launched the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojna, by transferring Rs 1,500 crore into the accounts of more than 18,000 farmers.
- This was the first installment of a Rs 5,750-crore scheme, meant to benefit farmers sowing 14 types of crops. Under the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, based on registered area and area under cultivation during Kharif crop season 2019, Rs 10,000 per acre will be deposited in the bank accounts of farmers as agriculture assistance grant for sowing crops such as paddy, maize and sugarcane
- The scheme was inaugurated through video conferencing on the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- The scheme aims to ensure minimum income availability to farmers growing one rabi and 13 kharif season crops in the state.

18. NADA provisionally suspends Savita Kumari, Ankit Shishodia for violating anti-doping rules

- The National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) has provisionally suspended two powerlifters, Savita Kumari and Ankit Shishodia, for violating anti-doping rules.
- Athletes were given an opportunity to present themselves before the Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) and explain their cases on the date and time fixed by the panel for a hearing.
- However, due to COVID 19, followed by lockdown in the country no sitting of the panel could take place in April.
- As per the Anti-Doping Rules of NADA, an appeal can be filed by the athlete and other parties against the order of the ADDP.
- However, due to COVID-19, followed by lockdown in the country no sitting of the panel could take place in April.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. Benjamin Netanyahu sworn-in as the PM of Israel for the 5th time

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu finally swore in his new government for the fifth time. The ceremony of the swearing-in of Israel's new government, the Knesset, was held in accordance with coronavirus social distancing directives. Netanyahu will be in power until 13 November 2021.
- This ended the 18-month political crisis in the country. Benny Gantz will serve in the specially created role of alternate Prime Minister and Defence Minister.

2. Traditional 'Hanko' practice is coming in the way of Japan's Covid-19 response

- In Japan, where the government has been fiercely engaged in tackling the novel coronavirus pandemic, a centuries-old ritual is sharing the blame for impeding social distancing efforts.
- The extensive and almost unavoidable use of the 'hanko'— a personal seal generally made from wood or plastic, for authorising official documents ranging from contracts, marriage registrations and even delivery slips, has been forcing several employees to go to the office to get work done.

- The hanko is a personal stamp that is equivalent to a signature in other countries, and is an essential part of several transactions.
- Small-sized and circular or square-shaped, the stamp is wet by an ink pad called 'shuniku', and the mark that it leaves on a document is called 'inkan'
- Even today, when many countries have seen a push towards paperless systems and adopting digital signatures, the hanko remains popular in Japan.

3.China announces USD 2 billion in coronavirus help at WHO assembly

- China will provide USD 2 billion over two years to fight the coronavirus pandemic.
- The USD 2 billion over the next two years will support COVID-19 response efforts, particularly in developing countries.
- The announcement came as China faced growing global pressure over the lockdowns, death toll and a huge increase in coronavirus cases that has brought the world to a standstill.

4. Nepal approves new map including Lipulekh, Kalapani, Limpiyadhura amid border row with India

- Nepal's cabinet has endorsed a new political map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura under its territory, amid a border dispute with India.
- The move announced by foreign minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali came weeks after he said that efforts were on to resolve the border issue with India through diplomatic initiatives.
- The Lipulekh pass is a far western point near Kalapani. Both India and Nepal claim Kalapani as an integral part of their territory - India as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and Nepal as part of Dharchula district. India has said that the recently-inaugurated road section in Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand lies completely within its territory.

5.U.S President Trump orders US flag to be flown at half-staff over next 3 days

- The US President Donald Trump ordered that the US flag to be flown at half-staff over the next three days as the death toll from COVID-19 surpasses 95,000. Flags will be lowered on all Federal Buildings and National Monuments to half-staff over the next three days in memory of the Americans lost to the Coronavirus.
- The flags will continue to be flown at half-staff on Memorial Day, observed on 25th May every year, in honour of those in the US military who died serving their country.
- The stripes on the US flag represent the original 13 Colonies and the stars represent the 50 states of the Union.

6.US Senate passes a bill to delist Chinese companies from American stock exchanges

- US Senate has passed a bill to delist Chinese companies from American stock exchanges. The senate on Wednesday unanimously approved the bill brought by Republican Senator John Kennedy and Democrat Senator, Chris Van Hollen.
- The legislation requires companies to certify that they are not owned or controlled by a foreign government.
- They would be required to submit to an audit that can be reviewed by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, which has been objected to by China. The move may result in Chinese companies like Alibaba Group Holdings Ltd. and Baidu Inc. being barred from listing on US stock exchanges.

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New Appointments and Person in News

1. Zubair Iqbal appointed as MD of J&K Bank, Chibber to continue as Chairman

- The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) administration approved the appointment of senior vice president (SVP) of HDFC bank Zubair Iqbal as the new Managing Director (MD) of Jammu and Kashmir Bank, for a period of 3 years.
- In another order, Rajesh Kumar Chibber, who is currently MD and Chairman of J&K bank, has been reappointed as the Chairman for the period of 3 years.
- The RBI had extended the tenure of Chibber as MD of the bank for a period of 3 months in April 2020. Parvez Ahmed was removed by the erstwhile state government on alleged charges of corruption, nepotism and favouritism.

2. Alibaba's Jack Ma resigns from SoftBank board after huge loss

- Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma will be resigning from SoftBank board of directors. Jack Ma serving for nearly 13 years in the board. Ma is expected to resign from the Group's board on June 25.
- The news comes as the group posted record financial loss of USD 13 billion. Jack Ma had retired as the Executive Chairman of Alibaba in September 2019.

3. "Dilip Oommen" is appointed as the next President of Indian Steel Association

- Indian Steel Association (ISA) appointed Dilip Oommen as its new President with immediate effect.
- An extraordinary board meeting was called to decide on the leadership of the association after Tata Steel CEO TV Narendran stepped down as President on May 1, months before the end of his term in August. Oommen was unanimously appointed as President for the next two years.
- Oommen is a veteran of the steel industry with more than 37 years of experience and an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (IIT-K).

3. Financial crisis expert "Carmen Reinhart" appointed as the World Bank's chief economist

- The World Bank appointed financial crisis expert Carmen Reinhart as its new vice president and chief economist, leaning on the expertise of the former International Monetary Fund executive as the Covid-19 pandemic plunges the global economy into the deepest recession since the Great Depression.
- The former Bear Stearns chief economist will begin her role at the World Bank on June 15, the Washington-based lender said in a statement on May 20.
- "Carmen has dedicated her career to understanding and surmounting financial crises in both advanced and developing economies in order to achieve growth and higher living standards," David Malpass, the World Bank's president, said. "Her thought leadership during this unprecedented period will be invaluable to the Bank Group and our clients."

4. Govinda Rajulu Chintala appointed as the Chairman of NABARD

- The appointments committee of the Union Cabinet appointed Govinda Rajulu Chintala as Chairman of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). He is the successor of Harsh Kumar Bhanwala.
- He will serve as the Chairman of NABARD for the period of 2 years till his superannuation in July 31, 2022. Chintala currently serves as the Chief general manager of NABARD.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is an Apex Development Financial Institution in India. The bank is active in developing Financial Inclusion policy.

5. Union Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan to take charge as Chairman of WHO Executive Board

- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan will take charge as the chairman of the World Health Organization (WHO) 34-member Executive Board.
- He will replace Dr Hiroki Nakatani of Japan. The WHO is governed by two decision-making bodies, the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board.

BANKING

1. Borrowing limit of states raised from 3% of Gross State Domestic Product to 5% in 2020-21

- The government has decided to increase the borrowing limits of states from 3% to 5% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for the year 2020-21.
- The state governments, so far, have borrowed only 14% of the limit which is authorised to them while 86% of the limit remains unutilized.
- The finance minister said that part of the borrowing will be linked to specific reforms like increasing job creation through investment and promoting urban development, health and sanitation.
- Rs 15000 crore have been announced for states, essential items, testing labs and kits, along with rolling out of teleconsultation services, the launch of Aarogya Setu app and protection to health care workers with adequate PPEs.

2. Canara Bank launches special gold loan business vertical

- Canara Bank has launched a special business vertical dedicated for gold loans to meet the financial needs of its customers as they are in need of immediate credit support to meet their emergency needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The bank has launched a gold loan campaign till 30th June, 2020 with an interest rate as low as 7.85% per annum minimum turnaround time (TAT) and high-flexibility to meet credit needs to help the customers with much needed liquidity to revive their business activities and to bring back normalcy to their lives.
- In addition to this, as Indians consider gold ornaments & coins as an asset, they can utilise their jewellery to avail credit for emergency cash. The loans are payable within a period of 1 to 3 years with flexible repayment options and can be availed from all designated branches across India.

3. NABARD releases Rs 20,500 crores of funds for Kharif and pre-monsoon operations

- In an attempt to augment the resources of Cooperative banks and RRBs, Nabard has provided financial assistance to these entities for their pre-monsoon Kharif operations. Of the Rs 20,500 crores that Nabard is providing the farmers, Rs 15,200 crore will be through cooperative banks and the balance Rs 5,300 crore will be through RRBs as special liquidity facility in various states.
- The fund is given as a means of front loading the resources of these banks so as to ensure adequate liquidity with them for financing farmers. This is against Rs 5,000 crore lent during the first quarter of the last fiscal year. The banks have also initiated a programme of saturation of Kisan credit cards-KCC- and about 12 lakh new KCC cards have been issued by Cooperative banks and RRBs during the last two months. A total of 4.2 crore KCCs have been issued by Cooperative banks & RRBs as on 31 March 2020.

4. Kotak Mahindra bank Launches India's First Zero-Contact, Video KYC Savings Account

- Kotak Mahindra Bank (Kotak) announced the introduction of Video KYC to open a full-fledged Kotak 811 savings account, a first in Indian banking. This initiative, presently being launched on a pilot basis for savings accounts, is in line with Kotak's digital-first strategy and is a start-to-end fully integrated, zero-contact, completely digital and paperless account opening + Full KYC journey.
- The Video KYC process to onboard new customers will be extended to other products in a phased manner.
- With Video KYC, verification of KYC documents and recording of the customer's signature are completed via a video call with the bank, eliminating the need for a visit to the branch or in-person interaction, biometric verification or sharing of physical documents.

5. RBI cuts repo rate by 40 bps to 4 pct

- The Reserve Bank of India cut the repo rate by 40 basis points from 4.4 percent to 4 percent.
- It also reduced the reverse repo rate at 3.35 percent to maintain accommodative stance.
- The six-member Monetary Policy Committee voted 5:1 in favour of 40 bps cut in interest rate.

- Private consumption has seen the biggest blow due to COVID-19 outbreak, following investment demand has halted big time impacting the government revenues severely due to slowdown in economic activity.

Books and Awards

1.A Book titled “Wuhan Diary: Dispatches from a Quarantined City” authored by Fang Fang released

- The book titled as “Wuhan Diary: Dispatches from a Quarantined City” authored by Chinese literary writer Fang Fang is a compilation of online diary entries and social media posts that document 60 days of lockdown during COVID-19, captures the challenges of daily life and the changing moods and emotions of being quarantined without reliable information & is a remarkable record of the extraordinary time.
- The book was released in India in an ebook format published by Harper Non Fiction, the audio will follow on May 26.

2. India's Chief Hydrographer Vice Admiral Vinay Badhwar wins UK award

- Vice Admiral Vinay Badhwar has been honoured with the 2019 Alexander Dalrymple Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Indian hydrography and across the wider Indian Ocean region.
- He is the National Hydrographer to the government of India.
- The award, first presented by the UK Ministry of Defence-sponsored UKHO in 2006, is named after the first Hydrographer of the Admiralty, Alexander Dalrymple.
- The recipients of the award are selected by the chief Committee of the UK Hydrographic Office(UKHO) for his or her efforts in raising the standards of hydrography, cartography and navigation around the world

3.Bond’s new book released in an e-book format on his 86th birthday

- Ruskin Bond’s new book titled “Hop On: My Adventures on Boats, Trains and Planes” was released on his 86th Birthday in an e-book format.
- The book presents its readers with a number of the author’s hilarious journeys and travel adventures. The illustrations for Ruskin Bond’s new book has been done by Samrat Halder.

SCIENCE TECH & DEFENCE

1.Indian Army’s only cavalry unit set to replace horses with tanks

- The Army is planning to convert its famous 61st Cavalry, the only active serving horse cavalry regiment in the world, into a regular armoured regiment with tanks. A senior officer at the Army headquarters said the aim was to transform the Jaipur-based 61st Cavalry into “a combat force” from its present role of being “largely a ceremonial unit” that also engages in sporting activities like polo.
- The famous 61st Cavalry is being converted into a regular armoured regiment on the basis of a recommendation made by the Lieutenant General DB Shekatkar (retd) committee in a report on sharpening the army’s combat edge and trimming its revenue expenditure.
- The Jaipur-based 61st Cavalry is likely to be equipped with T-72 tanks
- The 61st Cavalry was raised in Jaipur in October 1953 by putting together mounted elements of cavalry regiments of the erstwhile princely states of India.
- Rich in sporting history, the regiment accounts for one Padma Shri, 10 Arjuna Awards, 11 Asian Games medals and a raft of representations at the Polo World Cup and international equestrian competitions.

2.ISRO directs startups to build local tech for Gaganyaan mission

- India’s space agency Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has directed the startups to develop tools and machines for its maiden human space flight Gaganyaan-1 mission. ISRO focuses to potentially

help them build products and solutions that they can exploit commercially. The move is expected to open up opportunities for new types of companies to come up in India

- Amid lockdown, ISRO has identified a set of 17 technologies that to develop locally at lower costs for use in its Gaganyaan missions. ISRO has opened up its facilities to companies like Larson & Toubro and HAL to build its polar satellite launch vehicle (PSLV).

3. Airtel Africa extends e-learning support to students with UNICEF

- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) partnered with Bharti Airtel’s Africa Arm to support the school children in the coronavirus affected areas and provide them access to remote learning and financial assistance to their families through mobile cash transfer.
- Under this partnership, Airtel Africa will utilize mobile technology to support over 133 million school age children affected due to closure of schools in the Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa).
- This partnership will support UNICEF’s Global Agenda for Action for children. The plan provides the outline of global actions of private and public sector partners to provide healthcare, safety and education to the children including the kids with disabilities and girls who are at risk of violence.



SPORTS

1. Anil Kumble-led ICC committee recommends ban on saliva due to COVID-19 pandemic

- Cricket is set to do away with one of its oldest practices, the use of saliva to shine the ball, as an Anil Kumble-led ICC committee recommended banning it owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- However, the ICC Cricket Committee saw no health hazard in continuing with the use of sweat.
- The committee also pushed for bringing back two non-neutral umpires (both from the host nation) for all international matches, as DRS ensures more accurate decision making.
- In line with its proposal, the committee has recommended an increase in the use of DRS review per innings, from two to three.

2. Germany’s Bundesliga becomes 1st major sports event to resume post COVID-19 lockdown

- The Bundesliga primary football league of Germany becomes the world’s first major sports event to resume after COVID-19 lockdown.
- The Bundesliga games began with empty stadium though the stadium had the capacity to hold more than 80,000 players. Bundesliga means “Federal League”.

OBITUARIES

1. Iran’s OPEC governor Hossein Kazempour Ardebili passes away after brain haemorrhage

- Iran’s OPEC governor Hossein Kazempour Ardebili died after suffering a brain hemorrhage and spending nearly two weeks in a coma. Kazempour, 68, had served as Iran’s governor to OPEC since 2013 and was seen as a key aide to Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.
- Kazempour Ardebili was a key figure in Iran’s oil industry and served as the country’s deputy foreign minister and deputy oil minister in the 1980s.
- He was ambassador to Japan in the early 1990s, while at the same time serving as OPEC governor.

2. Noted Marathi writer Ratnakar Matkari passes away at 81

- Noted Marathi dramatist, litterateur, theatre personality and National Award-winning director, Ratnakar Matkari passed away in Mumbai.
- He had tested COVID-19 positive four days ago and was undergoing treatment.
- A versatile writer, Mr. Ratnakar Matkari has the honour of being decorated by both Sangeet Natak Akademi and Sahitya Akademi for his wide range of works.
- His film 'Investment' bagged the National Award in the Regional Category section.
- Some of his noted Marathi dramas include 'Arannyak' based on Mahabharata, 'Lok Katha 78', 'Dubhang', 'Ashwamedh', 'Chaar Diwas Premache' and 'Indira'.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. World AIDS Vaccine Day observed every year on 18th May

- World AIDS Vaccine Day or HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, is observed on May 18 across the world.
- It is primarily celebrated to emphasise upon the need for a vaccine for Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and recognises the efforts of health professionals and researchers who have been working towards this goal.
- The first World AIDS Vaccine Day was observed on May 18, 1998. Exactly one year ago, on May 18, 1997, the then United States president Bill Clinton had asserted upon the importance of creating a vaccine for the deadly disease.

2. International Tea Day is observed annually on May 21

- The concerning resolution was adopted on December 21, 2019 and calls on the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to lead the observance of the Day.
- The move could provide the much-needed push to create awareness for tea consumption. The International Tea Day aims to raise awareness of the long history and the deep cultural and economic significance of tea around the world.
- Also, December 15 is celebrated as International Tea Day in tea producing nations such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Uganda, India and Tanzania. However, this was not really official and was done by an NGO.

3. International Day for Biological Diversity: 22 May

- The International Day for Biodiversity is observed on May 22 to raise awareness on various issues related to threats that stare biodiversity in the face. The first International Day for Biological Diversity, also known as World Biodiversity day, was created in a UN General Assembly in 1993.
- Biodiversity or Biological diversity means the life on Earth constitutes a variety of living organisms.
- There are at least 8 million species on this planet including plants, animals, fungi, bacteria to name a few. The biodiversity we have today was formed through billions of years of evolution. The theme for the year 2020 is "Our solutions are in nature".

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