

# **Current Event**

**May,2020**

## **National**

### **Manipur black rice, Gorakhpur terracotta got GI tag**

The black rice of Manipur (Chak-Hao,) and the Gorakhpur terracotta have bagged the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. The application for Chak-Hao was filed by the Consortium of Producers of Chak-Hao (Black Rice), Manipur and was facilitated by the Department of Agriculture, Government of Manipur and the North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC). In the case of Gorakhpur terracotta, the application was filed by Laxmi Terracotta Murtikala Kendra in Uttar Pradesh.

Chak-Hao, a scented glutinous rice which has been in cultivation in Manipur over centuries, is characterised by its special aroma. It is normally eaten during community feasts and is served as Chak-Haokheer. Chak-Hao has also been used by traditional medical practitioners as part of traditional medicine. According to the GI application filed, this rice takes the longest cooking time of 40-45 minutes due to the presence of a fibrous bran layer and higher crude fibre content.

At present, the traditional system of Chak-Hao cultivation is practised in some pockets of Manipur. The terracotta work of Gorakhpur is a centuries-old traditional art form, where the potters make various animal figures like, horses, elephants, camel, goat, ox, etc. with hand-applied ornamentation. Both the products have been in circulation for centuries and are important sources of income.

### **Mission Sagar**

On May 12th, as part of "Mission Sagar", INS Kesari entered Port of Male, Maldives. The Government of India is providing assistance to friendly foreign countries and towards this INS Kesari is carrying 580 tons of food provisions for the people of Maldives.

Mission Sagar has been launched as part of the government's outreach initiative towards five Island nations in the Indian Ocean amidst the ongoing COVID-19. Under the mission, Indian Naval Ship Kesari has departed for Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, to provide food items, COVID-related medicines including HCQ tablets and special Ayurvedic medicines with medical

assistance teams. INS Kesari would also enter the Port of Male in the Republic of Maldives, to provide them 600 tons of food provisions.

### **National Migrant Information System**

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has developed an online Dashboard named National Migrant Information System (NMIS) .It has been developed to capture the information regarding movement of migrants and facilitate the smooth movement of stranded persons across states.The online portal would maintain a central repository on migrant workers and help in speedy inter-State communication/co-ordination to facilitate their smooth movement to native places. It has additional advantages like contact tracing, which may be useful in overall COVID-19 response work.The key data pertaining to the persons migrating has been standardized for uploading such as name, age, mobile no., originating and destination district, date of travel etc., which States are already collecting. The mobile numbers of people can be used for contact tracing and movement monitoring during COVID-19.

### **Government declares five-star garbage-free cities**

On May 19, 2020 ,Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has declared six cities- Ambikapur, Rajkot, Surat, Mysore, Indore and Navi Mumbai as five-star garbage-free cities.The star rating of garbage-free cities was announced by the. Overall, six cities were rated 5-star, 65 cities were rates 3-star and 70 cities were rated with one star.The Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri also launched the revised protocol for the star rating of garbage free cities. The Ministry has now brought importance of sanitation and effective solid waste management to the forefront due to the coronavirus crisis.The star rating protocol was launched by the Ministry in January 2018 to institutionalize a mechanism for cities to achieve garbage free status and motivate other cities to achieve higher degrees of cleanliness.

### **Vande Bharat Mission**

On May 13, 2020 ,Indian seafarers stranded in different parts of the world will have to register for evacuation through the Vande Bharat Mission so that the government can evacuate them. Vande Bharat Mission is the biggest evacuation exercise to bring back Indian citizens stranded abroad amidst the coronavirus-induced travel restrictions.It is also considered as the largest exercise to bring back Indian citizens since the evacuation of 177,000 from the Gulf region in the early 1990s at the start of hostilities between Iraq and Kuwait during the first Gulf War. Air India and its subsidiary Air India Express will operate 64 flights to bring back stranded Indians from 12 countries.The entire cost of travel will be borne by the passengers under the mission.

# International

## **Russia will launch its first Arktika-M satellite**

Russia will launch its first Arktika-M satellite for monitoring the Arctic climate and environment at the end of the year. The first Arktika-M spacecraft has been developed and is undergoing radio-electronic testing the launch is planned for the end of 2020. The second Arktika-M satellite is still under development and will be launched in 2023. The launch of the first Arktika-M satellite from the Baikonur space center was planned for December 9, 2020. The satellite will be launched using a Soyuz-2.1b carrier rocket with the Fregat booster.

## **Global Energy Review 2020 report**

International Energy Agency has released its Global Energy Review 2020 report. According to report Global energy demand is projected to fall six per cent in 2020. This will be steepest decline in percentage terms in 70 years and the largest ever in absolute terms. All fuels except renewables are set to experience their greatest contractions in demand for decades. The projected 6% decline would be more than seven times the impact of the 2008 financial crisis on global energy demand, reversing the growth of global energy demand over the last five years.

According to the report advanced economies will experience the greatest declines in energy demand in 2020. In India, energy demand would decline for the first time, following on from low demand growth in 2019. Global oil demand in 2020 is projected to drop by 9 per cent or 9 million barrels per day on an average across the year, returning oil consumption to 2012 levels.

Global coal demand is projected decline by 8 per cent, in large part because electricity demand will be nearly 5 per cent lower over the course of the year. Global Electricity Demand has been declined by 20% during periods of full lockdown in several countries. However, the residential demand is outweighed by reductions in commercial and industrial operations.

## **Environmental Performance Index**

World Economic Forum has released 12th edition of Environmental Performance Index was released in June 2020. Environmental Performance Index (EPI) is a biennial report prepared by Yale University and Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum.

The EPI offers a scorecard that highlights leaders and laggards in environmental performance and provides practical guidance for countries that aspire to move toward a sustainable future. EPI ranks countries on environmental health and ecosystem vitality using 32 performance indicators across 11 issue categories. The report also includes 10-year trends in environmental performance at the national and global levels.

Denmark with a score of 82.5 has topped the index. This was followed by Luxembourg (score 82.3) second, Switzerland (score 81.5) third, United Kingdom (score 81.3) fourth and France (score 80.0) fifth. Countries lowest in the index are – Liberia (180), Myanmar (179), Afghanistan (178), Sierra

Leone(177), Cote d' Ivoire(176). India is ranked 168 with Ghana (score 27.6). In 2018, India was ranked 177. Among India's neighbours, Bhutan was ranked 107th, Sri Lanka 109th, China 120th, Pakistan 142nd and Nepal 145th.

### **G20 countries pledged over US\$21 billion to fight Covid-19**

G20 countries pledged over US\$21 billion to fight the ongoing pandemic Covid-19. The fund pledged will be routed towards diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics, and research and development. Earlier in March 2020, G20 nations pledged to inject USD 5 trillion into the global economy to combat upcoming deep recession.

G20 is a leading forum of the world's major economics that seeks to develop global policies to address today's most pressing challenges. The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the European Union. The 19 countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United states. The G20 consists of both developed and developing countries.

## **Economy**

### **Open Budget Survey 2019**

According to the 7th edition of 'Open Budget Survey 2019' India has been placed at 53rd position among 117 nations in terms of budget transparency and accountability. The survey, conducted by International Budget Partnership (IBP). It has provided India's Union Budget process a transparency score of 49 out of 100, which is higher than the global average of 45.

India also functioned better in publishing timely and relevant information in the audit reports and in-year reports. New Zealand tops the chart with a score 87. Some of the other large developing countries, with the exception of China, have got much higher transparency scores.

### **Supreme court: Cooperative banks shall be placed under SARFAESI Act**

The Supreme Court of India pronounced its judgement that cooperative banks shall be placed under SARFAESI Act On May 05, 2020, The Supreme Court brought cooperative banks under a stringent 2002 law that empowers lenders to seize and sell defaulters' assets, in a boost for these institutions that play a vital role in financial inclusion across India.

According to the judgement, cooperative banks come under the category of banks as defined under Section 2(1)(c) of the Sarfaesi Act, and the recovery procedures mentioned under that law apply to cooperative banks as well.

The court, also upheld the legislative power of the Parliament to bring cooperative banks under the ambit of Sarfaesi Act.The bench also effectively upheld a 28 January 2003 notification issued under

the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, that brought cooperative banks within the class of “banks” under the Act.

Sarfaesi Act allows secured creditors to take possession of the assets of a borrower who fails to pay dues within 60 days of demanding repayment. The judgement also stated that cooperative banks were bound by the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and all the other legislation applicable to banks under the RBI Act.

The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act, 2002 (also known as the SARFAESI Act) is an Indian law. It allows banks and other financial institutions to auction residential or commercial properties (of Defaulter) to recover loans.

### **World Bank economic assistance to fight COVID-19**

On May 15, India and the World Bank has signed a \$750 million of \$1 billion proposed assistance on for accelerating India’s COVID-19 Social Protection Response Programme to support India’s efforts at providing social assistance to the poor and vulnerable households, severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This takes the total commitment from the Bank towards emergency COVID-19 response in India to \$2 billion. A \$1 billion support was announced last month towards immediate support to India’s health sector.

This new support will be funded in two phases – an immediate allocation of \$750 million for fiscal year 2020 and a \$250 million second tranche that will be made available for fiscal year 2021. The first phase of the operation will be implemented countrywide through the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY). It will immediately help scale-up cash transfers and food benefits, using a core set of pre-existing national platforms and programmes such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). In the second phase, the programme will deepen the social protection package, whereby additional cash and in-kind benefits based on local needs will be extended.

### **Financial Package allocation to different sector of economy**

On May 13 and 14, Finance Minister announced measures for relief and credit support related to businesses to support Indian Economy’s fight against COVID-19. The economic package of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is of Rs 20 lakh crore which is equivalent to 10 percent of GDP.

Rs 3 lakh crore Emergency Working Capital Facility announced for Businesses, including MSMEs. To provide relief to the business, additional working capital finance of 20% of the outstanding credit as on 29 February 2020, in the form of a Term Loan at a concessional rate of interest will be provided. The amount will be 100% guaranteed by the Government of India providing a total liquidity of Rs. 3.0 lakh crores to more than 45 lakh MSMEs.

Rs 20,000 crore Subordinate Debt for Stressed MSMEs Provision made for Rs. 20,000 cr subordinate debt for two lakh MSMEs which are NPA or are stressed.

Rs 50,000 crores equity infusion through MSME Fund of Funds.

The definition of MSME will be revised by raising the Investment limit. An additional criteria of turnover also being introduced. The distinction between manufacturing and service sector will also be eliminated.

No Global tenders for Government tenders of up to Rs 200 crores. General Financial Rules (GFR) of the Government will be amended to disallow global tender enquiries in procurement of Goods and Services of value of less than Rs 200 crores

EPF Contribution to be reduced for Employers and Employees for 3 months. Statutory PF contribution of both employer and employee reduced to 10% each from existing 12% each for all establishments covered by EPFO for next 3 months.

Government will launch Rs 30,000 crore Special Liquidity Scheme, liquidity being provided by RBI. Investment will be made in primary and secondary market transactions in investment grade debt paper of NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs.

Rs 90,000 crore Liquidity Injection for DISCOMs

Power Finance Corporation and Rural Electrification Corporation will infuse liquidity in the DISCOMs to the extent of Rs 90000 crores in two equal instalments.

All central agencies like Railways, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and CPWD will give extension of up to 6 months for completion of contractual obligations, including in respect of EPC and concession agreements.

Technology system to be used enabling Migrants to access PDS (Ration) from any Fair Price Shops in India by March,2021-One Nation one Ration Card. Pilot scheme for portability of ration cards will be extended to 23 states. By that, 67 crore beneficiaries covering 83% of PDS population will be covered by National portability of Ration cards by August, 2020. 100% National portability will be achieved by March, 2021.

Central Government will launch a scheme for migrant workers and urban poor to provide ease of living at affordable rent. Affordable Rental Housing Complexes will provide social security and quality life to migrant labour, urban poor, and students

Government of India will provide Interest subvention of 2% for prompt payees for a period of 12 months to MUDRA Shishu loanees, who have loans below Rs 50,000.

A special scheme will be launched within a month to facilitate easy access to credit to Street vendors, who are amongst the most adversely impacted by the present situation. Under this scheme, bank credit facility for initial working capital up to Rs. 10,000 for each enterprise will be extended. It is expected that 50 lakh street vendors will be benefitted under this scheme and credit of Rs. 5,000 crore would flow to them.

The Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme for Middle Income Group (annual Income between Rs 6 and 18 lakhs) will be extended up to March 2021. This will benefit 2.5 lakhs middle income families during 2020-21 and will lead to investment of over Rs 70,000 crore in housing sector.

# Science

## Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the launch of Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS) with an outlay of Rs 400 crore for creating state of the art testing infrastructure for this sector. This has been done to give a boost to domestic defence and aerospace manufacturing.

The Scheme would run for the duration of five years and envisages to setup six to eight new test facilities in partnership with private industry. This will facilitate indigenous defence production, consequently reduce imports of military equipment and help make the country self-reliant.

The projects under the Scheme will be provided with up to 75 percent government funding in the form of 'Grant-in-Aid'. The remaining 25 per cent of the project cost will have to be borne by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).

## Scientists develop mobile indoor disinfection sprayer

Scientists at Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI), Durgapur, have developed two mobile indoor Disinfection Sprayer units on May 16, 2020. These units can be used for cleaning and disinfecting pathogenic micro-organism effectively, especially in hospitals.

This technology will have relevance even beyond the current COVID-19 crisis, since viruses have been existent throughout and a substantial number of cases of such influenza has been spreading throughout the globe every year.

These are named as Battery Powered Disinfectant Sprayer (BPDS) and Pneumatically Operated Mobile Indoor Disinfection (POMID). These can be used to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, light switches etc.

The sprayer systems in both BPDS and POMID are designed with two-stage spraying units and separate storage tanks to clean and disinfect the indoor areas by the numbers of fixed and flexible nozzles set in the lower and upper tiers.

There is also an industrial variant of the Disinfectant Sprayer for heavy usage and to cover a larger area. These sprayers are also equipped with mopping features and extendable arms to reach hidden area and clean comprehensively.

## Indian Coast Guard Ship Sachet

On May 15, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Sachet and two interceptor boats (IBs) C-450 and C-451 in Goa via video conference

The ICGS Sachet, the first in the series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) has been designed & built indigenously by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL).

The 105 metre long ship 'Sachet' displaces approximately 2,350 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 KW diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots, with an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles.

The ship is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift boarding and search & rescue operations.

The ship is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to undertake oil spill pollution response at sea.

The IBs C-450 and C-451 are indigenously designed & built by Larsen & Toubro Shipyard Hazira, and fitted with latest navigation and communication equipment.

The ICG has to its credit of saving about 400 lives at sea, 4,500 lives as part of assistance rendered to civil authorities and undertook 32 medical evacuations in the year 2019 alone.

The two 30 metre long boats are capable of achieving speeds in excess of 45 knots and designed for high speed interception, close coast patrol and low intensity maritime operations.

The IBs has about 70 per cent of indigenous contents, thus providing the necessary fillip to the Indian shipbuilding industry. With the commissioning of these ships, the ICG has reached a landmark 150 ships & Boats and 62 aircraft.

## Shorts Notes

### Personalities:

#### Dr. Harsh Vardhan

The Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan has been elected as Chair of the Executive Board of World Health Organization for the year 2020-21. This took place today during the 147th session of the Executive Board, in a meeting that was virtually held. He has replaced Dr Hiroki Nakatani of Japan. Dr Harsh Vardhan also shared India's experience of combating COVID-19. and said that India has a mortality of 3 per cent only. In a country of 1.35 billion, there are only 0.1 million cases of COVID19. The recovery rate is above 40 per cent and the doubling rate is 13 days.

#### Chuni Goswami

On April 30, Legendary Footballer Chuni Goswami died in Kolkata after prolonged illness. He was 82 years old. Chuni Goswami was the captain of gold medal winning Indian football team of Jakarta Asian Games held in 1962. He was awarded Arjun , Padmasree and several others prestigious awards for his outstanding contributions in the field of Sports. He received Mohonbagan Ratna awards in 2005. The West Bengal Government conferred him the highest civilian award Banga Bibhusan in 2013 . Chuni Goswami was also captain of Bengal Ranji Cricket team. He was also Sheriff of Kolkata.



## **Ramesh Babu**

On May 1, State-owned power giant NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation Limited) appointed Ramesh Babu as director (operations). He was the successor of Prakash Tiwari who retired on April 30, 2020. Ramesh Babu appointed as NTPC dir operations. Babu as a professional manager and strategic planner has led several initiatives for improving reliability and efficiency of power stations.

## **ThangjamDhabali Singh**

ThangjamDhabali Singh was conferred the 'Order of Rising Sun – Gold and Silver Rays' by the Japan government. He is an allopathic doctor by profession and founder of the Manipur Tourism Forum (MTF). He has been felicitated for promoting a better understanding of Japan in India and deepening ties between the two countries. The 'Order of the Rising Sun' is conferred on persons with achievements in international relations, promotion of Japanese culture, environmental preservation, welfare or achievements in their fields. It was constituted by Japanese Emperor Meiji in 1875.

## **Operations & Campaign:**

### **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation on May 12, 2020 amid COVID-19. Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, a special economic package of Rs 20 lakh crore was launched by Prime Minister to tackle with the crisis of COVID 19.

Prime Minister observed that in order to fulfill the dream of making the 21st century India's, the way forward is through ensuring that the country becomes self-reliant. Prime Minister remarked that the definition of self-reliance has undergone a change in the globalized world and clarified that when the country talks about self-reliance, it is different from being self-centered.

He said that a self-reliant India will stand on five pillars viz. Economy, which brings in quantum jump and not incremental change; Infrastructure, which should become the identity of India; System, based on 21st century technology driven arrangements; Vibrant Demography, which is our source of energy for a self-reliant India; and Demand, whereby the strength of our demand and supply chain should be utilized to full capacity.

Prime Minister announced a special economic package and gave a clarion call for Atmanirbhar Bharat. The package of Rs 20 lakh crore, which is equivalent to almost 10% of India's GDP. Prime Minister observed that the package will also focus on land, labour, liquidity and laws. It will cater to various sections including cottage industry, MSMEs, labourers, middle class, industries, among others.

## **Operation Samudra Setu**

On May 5, Indian Navy launched Operation Samudra Setu, as a part of national effort to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas.

Indian Naval Ships Jalashwa and Magar are presently enroute to the port of Malè, Republic of Maldives to commence evacuation operations from 08 May 2020 as part of Phase-1. A total of 1000 persons are planned to be evacuated during the first trip, catering for COVID- related social distancing norms vis-a-vis the carrying capacity and medical facilities available onboard.

The ships have been suitably provisioned for the evacuation operation. The evacuated personnel would be provided the basic amenities and medical facilities during the sea-passage. The evacuated personnel will be disembarked at Kochi, Kerala and entrusted to the care of State authorities.

# Current Events

## June, 2020

### National

#### **Cabinet renamed Kolkata Port as Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has renamed Kolkata Port as Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port. It is situated on the bank of the Hooghly River. The Kolkata Port is the first major port as well as the only riverine port in the city of Kolkata. The Kolkata port was commissioned in 1870. It is a fresh water port ornated by names such as Diamond Harbour, Gateway to Eastern India.

In due consideration of contribution made by eminent national leaders in past, several ports have been re-named. Nhava Sheva Port Trust-Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (1989), Tuticorin Port Trust-V.O. Chidambaranar Port Trust (2011), Ennore Port Limited-Kamarajar Port Limited (2014) and Kandla Port-Deendayal Port (2017).

#### **Andhra Pradesh launched country's first online waste management platform**

On 5<sup>th</sup> June, Andhra Pradesh government launched country's first online waste management platform. The online platform will ensure proper tracking, scrutiny and audit of the industrial waste. The online platform will be handled by newly formed Andhra Pradesh Environment Management Corporation.

Andhra Pradesh Environment Management Corporation is charged with the collection, segregation and engaged with scientific disposal of industrial waste as well. The unit will be held responsible for safe disposal of all industrial waste generated in the state. This initiative will foster cleaner environment. Andhra Pradesh has a large number of industries falling under red and orange categories.

#### **Highest ever allocation of funds under MNREGA**

A provision of Rs. 1,01,500 crores have been made under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA) in the current financial year 2020-2021. It is the

highest ever provision of funds under MNREGA. A sum of Rs. 31,493 crores have already been released in 2020-2021, which is more than 50% of the budget estimated of the current Financial Year. A total of 60.80 crore persons days has been generated so far and work has been offered to 6.69 crore persons.

Average number of persons to whom work has been offered in May 2020 is 2.51 crore per day, which is 73% higher than the work offered in May last year, which was 1.45 crore persons per day. A total of 10 lakh works has been completed so far during the current Financial Year 2020-2021.

## **India Rankings 2020**

On 11th June, 'India Rankings 2020' is released by Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank. These rankings are released to map the level of higher education in the country under the National Institutional Ranking Framework launched in 2015.

Ranking for the fifth time was released in 10 categories viz Overall, University, Engineering, Management, Colleges, Pharmacy, Medical, Architecture, Law and Dental. "Dental" category has been introduced for the first time. In this survey, government and non-governmental higher educational institutions across the country have been included.

### **Top 5 Institutes in Overall Category:**

Indian Institute of Technology Madras  
Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru  
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi  
Indian Institute of Technology Bombay  
Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

## **India elected Non-permanent member of the UNSC**

On 18<sup>th</sup> June India was elected as Non-permanent member of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) from the Asia-Pacific Group. Along with India, Ireland, Mexico and Norway also won the Security Council elections. India garnered 184 votes out of the 192 ballots cast in the General Assembly. This is the 8th time that India will sit at the UN high-table. Its preceding terms were 1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, and 2011–12. Earlier in June Estonia, Niger, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam were also elected as non-permanent members to UNSC. These countries will take their seats on the Council beginning January 1, 2021.

## **About UNSC**

UNSC is one of the six organs of the United Nations. It has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Article 23 under Chapter fifth (The Security Council) defines UN Security Council composition. It has 15 Members of which five are permanent (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States) and other 10 are non-permanent elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.

# **International**

## **World Drug Report 2020**

On the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) has released the World Drug Report 2020.

### **Key Findings**

- Cannabis was the most used substance worldwide in 2018, with an estimated 192 million people using it worldwide.
- Around 269 million people used drugs worldwide in 2018, which is 30 per cent more than in 2009, while over 35 million people suffer from drug use disorders.
- Opioids, however, remain the most harmful, as over the past decade, the total number of deaths due to opioid use disorders went up 71 per cent.
- Cannabis also remains the main drug that brings people into contact with the criminal justice system, accounting for more than half of drug law offences cases.
- Adolescents and young adults account for the largest share of those using drugs.
- Impact of COVID-19: COVID-19 has caused shortages of drugs on the street, leading to increased prices and reduced purity.
- Rising unemployment caused by the pandemic will make poor more vulnerable to drug use and also to drug trafficking and cultivation in order to earn money.

## **Global Education Monitoring Report 2020**

A report titled "Global Education Monitoring Report 2020" has released by UNESCO. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in education systems across the world.

According to report about 40% of low- and lower-middle-income countries have not supported learners at risk of exclusion during this crisis, such as the poor, linguistic minorities and learners with disabilities.

Theme:

“Inclusion and education: All means all”.

Agenda:

To monitor progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on education as well as other education-related points in the SDG Agenda.

About UNESCO:

It is a specialized agency of the United Nations based in Paris, France. India has been a member of the UNESCO since its inception in 1946.

## **H-1B visa suspended**

On June 24, 2020 U.S. President Donald Trump signed executive order regarding suspension of H-1B visas. According to order, H4 visas (H-1B dependents), L visas (intra-company transfers), as well as H-2B (non-agricultural workers) and J visas will also be on hold through the year end.

This decision will impact a large number of Indian IT professionals and several American and Indian companies whom H-1B visas were issued by the U.S. government for the 2021 fiscal year beginning on October 1, 2020. A large number of Indian IT professionals who are seeking H-1B visa renewal will also be impacted.

## **Environmental Performance Index**

In June 2020, 12th edition of Environmental Performance Index was released. Environmental Performance Index (EPI) is a biennial report prepared by Yale University and Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum.

**The 2020 Index:**

- India is ranked 168 with Ghana (score 27.6). In 2018, India was ranked 177. Among India's neighbours, Bhutan was ranked 107th, Sri Lanka 109th, China 120th, Pakistan 142nd and Nepal 145th.
- Denmark with a score of 82.5 has topped the index. This was followed by Luxembourg (score 82.3) second, Switzerland (score 81.5) third, United Kingdom (score 81.3) fourth and France (score 80.0) fifth.
- Countries lowest in the index are – Liberia (180), Myanmar (179), Afghanistan (178), Sierra Leone (177), Cote d' Ivoire (176).

# **Economy**

## **India has retained its position as the third-largest economy in term of PPP**

In terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) India has retained its position as the third-largest economy in the world behind the China and US. The findings are part of the World Bank new PPPs for reference year 2017, under the International Comparison Programme (ICP) that adjust for differences in the cost of living across economies of the World.

Globally 176 economies participated in the 2017 cycle of ICP. The next ICP comparison will be conducted for reference year 2021. Overall, 19 economies contributed three-quarters of global GDP; three of these economies (India, Indonesia, and the Arab Republic of Egypt) were classified as lower-middle-income economies and six (China, the Russian Federation, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, and the Islamic Republic of Iran) were classified as upper-middle-income economies, with the remainder classified as high income economies.

## **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved \$750 million loan to India**

In June, 2020 Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved \$750 million loan to India to help the government strengthen its battle against the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on poor and vulnerable households.

Co-financed with the Asian Development Bank, the budgetary support will go toward bolstering economic aid for businesses, including for the informal sector, expanding social safety nets for the needy, and strengthening the country's health care systems.

AiIB's sovereign loans to India that have already been approved amount to \$3.06 billion, including a recent \$500-million COVID-19 emergency response. The current loan will be the second for India under AiIB's COVID-19 CRF.

## **OECD 'Economic Outlook'**

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projected that India's economy will contract 7.3 per cent in the current fiscal year if there is a second wave of the coronavirus (Covid-19) later this year. This is so far the steepest contraction that any agency has predicted for the country.

In the case of a double-hit by the pandemic, the OECD pegged global economic contraction at 7.6 per cent in 2020 and six per cent in case of a single-hit scenario. It said both scenarios are sobering, as economic activity cannot return to normal under these circumstances.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 37 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

## Science

### **Disinfection unit Ultra Swachh**

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a disinfection unit named Ultra Swachh. This unit will disinfect a wide range of materials, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), electronics items, fabrics, etc.

It has been developed by Delhi based DRDO laboratory; Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS) with industry partner M/s Gel Craft Healthcare Private Ltd, Ghaziabad. The system uses an advanced oxidative process comprising of multiple barrier disruption approach using Ozonated Space Technology for disinfection.

The system is double layered with specialised ozone sealant technology assuring trapping of ozone for the necessary disinfection cycle. It also has catalytic converter to ensure environment friendly exhaust i.e. only oxygen and water. The system is in compliance with International Standards of Industrial, Occupational, Personal and Environmental.

AAROGYA SETU has been developed by the agencies of the Government of India, in particular the NITI Aayog as a contact tracking app to monitor the spread of COVID-19. India has led the way in contact tracing for Covid-19; it preserves privacy and its design is secure, robust and scalable to billion users. Aarogya Setu is available on both iOS app store as well as Google play store, and the app uses “Bluetooth technology” and location data to track people infected with COVID-19 and also people who come in close contact with the ones infected. With this app, the Indian government wants to track the movement of people infected with coronavirus; the World Bank has now praised the app and said that the Indian innovation can greatly help prevent the spread of the virus, and further said that “India leads the way in contact tracing for Covid-19.” In early April 2020, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to download the Aarogya Setu app on their smartphones and said “It will battle against COVID-19 pandemic as Aarogya Setu is an important step in our battle against COVID-19. It offers useful knowledge through leveraging technology. As more and more people use it, it will increase its efficacy. I encourage all of you to download it”. Aarogya Setu has now become the most downloaded health app in the World.



## **Technology platform CHAMPIONS**

On June 1, 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the technology platform CHAMPIONS which stands for Creation and Harmonious Application of Modern Processes for Increasing the Output and National Strength. This portal is developed for making the smaller units big by solving their grievances, encouraging, supporting, helping and handholding.

### **Objective of CHAMPIONS:**

To resolve the problems of MSMEs including those of finance, raw materials, labour, regulatory permissions etc particularly in the Covid created difficult situation;

To help them capture new opportunities: including manufacturing of medical equipments and accessories like PPEs, masks, etc and supply them in National and International markets;

To identify and encourage the sparks: i.e. the potential MSMEs who are able to withstand the current situation and can become national and international champions.

### **Fishing cats**

In Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district (Odisha), The Odisha forest department has started a two-year conservation project for fishing cats. The project will be funded by the forest department of Odisha.

Fishing cats is listed as 'endangered' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List. This means it faces a high threat of extinction in the wild.

However, is not a well-known species and does not enjoy the same status as crocodiles do. One purpose of conservation measures was to create awareness among people for the species.

In 2019, during a mammal census in Bhitarkanika, only 20 fishing cats were spotted, according to Dash. This was, however, not indicative of the exact number of the species, as the census was conducted during the day.

The United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) lists the fishing cat on Appendix II in Article IV of CITES. The species is also classified under the first schedule of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

# Short Notes

## **Personalities:**

### **Pralay Mondal**

On 19th June, 2020, Private sector lender CSB Bank announced that its board has appointed Pralay Mondal as the organization's President (Retail, SME, Operations and IT). He is expected to join the private sector lender in September 2020.

### **Urjit Patel**

Former RBI governor Urjit Patel has been appointed as the chairman of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), India's premier economic think tank. NIPFP is an autonomous body set up jointly by the Ministry of Finance, the erstwhile Planning Commission, and several state governments. It maintains an independent non-government character and pursues research in public policy, advising the Central government as well as states. It was founded in 1976 and is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

HERD IMMUNITY is when a large number of people are vaccinated against a disease, lowering the chances of others being infected by it. When a sufficient percentage of a population is vaccinated, it slows the spread of the disease. It is also referred to as "*community immunity*" or herd protection. It was recently in news in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Shobha Sekhar**

In June 2020, Indian musician Shobha Sekhar was announced to be conferred the Medal of the Order of Australia. She is the founder of Kalakruthi, music organisation in Australia. The award recognises outstanding Australians — ordinary people, who do extraordinary things for their local community and for Australia.

## **Awards:**

### **Richard Dawkins Award 2020**

On June 7<sup>th</sup> India's famous Poet, lyricist and writer Javed Akhtar was announced to be conferred the Richard Dawkins Award 2020.

He became the first Indian to receive this award. He has been conferred for critical thinking, holding religious dogma up to scrutiny, advancing human progress and humanist values.

Atheist Alliance of America created the Richard Dawkins Award to honour an outstanding atheist whose contributions raised public awareness of the nontheist life stance in 2003. This award is named after Richard Dawkins, an English evolutionary biologist.

### **World Food Prize 2020**

On 11<sup>th</sup> June, Eminent Indian-American pedologist Rattan Lal has been conferred the 2020 World Food Prize. He will be awarded for developing and mainstreaming a soil-centric approach to increase food production that restores and conserves natural resources and mitigates climate change. He is a Distinguished University Professor of Soil Science and is also the Founding Director of the Carbon Management and Sequestration Centre at The Ohio State University.

The World Food Prize is the foremost international honour which recognizes the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world. The World Food Prize is often referred to as the “Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture”. It was founded by Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (1970).

### **Covid-19**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has named the new coronavirus disease as ‘Covid-19’. The new name is taken from the words "corona", "virus" and "disease", with 2019 representing the year when it emerged (the outbreak was reported to the WHO on 31st December, 2019).

- The virus is believed to have originated in a seafood market in Wuhan (China) that was involved in the illegal sale of wildlife. Many early patients of the virus had some link to the market, suggesting an animal-to-human spread. A further rise in the number of patients suggests that person-to-person spread is happening.
- The first case of the Novel Coronavirus in India was confirmed in Kerala; the patient is a female student at Wuhan University, on 30th January 2020. She had traveled back to her home town.
- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in various species of animals, such as cattle, camels, bats, and cats. They cause diseases ranging from cold to SARS.
- In some cases, animal coronaviruses can infect humans, which can then spread from person to person. This happened in the case of the SARS and MERS coronaviruses. It is also suggested that this might be happening in the current China virus case.
- Coronaviruses cause respiratory infections in humans which are generally mild, but sometimes, can be fatal.



