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Demise of Former Attorney General Ashok Desai

The former Attorney General and Senior Advocate practicing in the Supreme Court of India (SC) Ashok H. Desai died at the age of 77. The deceased had begun his career in Bombay High Court in 1956 and eventually became a Senior advocate on 8th August 1977. He served in the capacity of the Solicitor General of India from 18th December 1989 to 2nd December 1990. He had been the Attorney General of India from 9th July 1996 to 6th May 1998. He looked into decriminalisation of homosexuality, allegation of corruption against high-ranking public officials, striking down the censorship laws in Maharashtra and much more. He was acknowledged with Padma Bhushan and the Law Luminary Award in 2001 by the Government of India and Golden Anniversary Rotary Prize for University of London in 1956. He also co-edited and contributed for the book “Supreme but not Infallible: Essays in honour of the Supreme Court of India” in 2000 and penned “Judicial Overreach: A critique” in 2013.

The Introduction of Collabcad In ATL Schools

Atal Innovation Mission, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog and National Informatics Centre (NIC) jointly started CollabCAD in Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) schools on 13th April 2020. R Ramanan, Mission Director Atal Innovation Mission of NITI Aayog launched a CollabCAD online tool. This tool is a software that will enable students of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) across the country to create and modify 3D (3- Dimension) designs with free flow of creativity and imagination. It will be used around 5000 schools where Atal Tinkering Labs are established.

The Quarantine Facility at Visakhapatnam

Indian Navy has established a secluded place at INS Vishwakarma in Eastern Naval Command (ENC) for Indian nationals, who have been brought from COVID 19 affected countries. The camp is well equipped to accommodate nearly 200 personnel with all suitable facilities and other arrangements. The evacuated personnel will be closely monitored for a period of fourteen days. They will be subjected to adequate preventive care to prevent the spread of the virus.

‘Hemostat’ to stop rapid blood loss during accidents

Scientists of the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST) under the Department of Science & Technology, developed a starch-based ‘hemostat’ material that absorbs excess fluid by concentrating the natural clotting factors in the blood that stops the rapid blood loss. The newly developed hemostat features increased absorption capacity, improved absorption, inexpensive, biocompatible & biodegradable. The microparticles of the product viz. ‘calcium-modified carboxymethyl-starch,’ formed a cohesive & sticky gel within 30 seconds of contact with blood. Scientists also proved the non-toxicity and biodegradability of this product.

ATK FC lifted ISL trophy for the third time

Atletico de Kolkata (ATK) Football Club won the Indian Super League trophy for the third time after defeating Chennaiyin FC by 3-1 in the final match held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Margao, Goa. Javier Hernandez and Edu Garcia were the goal scorers for the winning team in the final match. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) granted it licence for playing. Apart from this, Mohun Bagan Athletic Club has bagged the Hero I-League Champions 2019-20 by defeating Aizawl FC at Kalyani Stadium, West Bengal. Bagan Club won this title for the second time, even when four rounds are still to go in the season.

Ravinder Singh Dhillon : The New CMD of Power Finance Corporation

The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet appointed Ravinder Singh Dhillon as a Chairman and Managing Director of Infrastructure Finance Company, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) on 16th March 2020 which will come into effect from June 1, 2020. The appointee will be serving in this post till his superannuation on May 31, 2023. Having more than 34 years of experience in the field of power sector, he served in capacities of Director of Projects, Public Grievance as well as an Executive director in PFC and RBI had classified it as an Infrastructure Finance Company on 28th July 2010.

The increasing share of Indian vendors in defence contracts

According to the March 2020 statement of the government, India’s share in contracts of the Union Defence Ministry for the procurement of defence equipment has increased from 39.06% (2015-16) to 75.03% (2019-20). Domestically made equipment are procured to the maximum possible extent. Around 158 contracts were signed in the last 5 years (2015-16 to 2019-20 till January 2020) with 100 Indian vendors in comparison to foreign buyers. In the last 5 years, helicopters, radars, electronic fuses, bridges, ballistic helmets, bulletproof jackets, rocket launchers & vehicles were the defence equipment that were procured from Indian vendors.

14th April : World Chagas Disease Day

The International Federation of Associations of People affected by Chagas Disease observes World Chagas Disease Day in memory of the event of the 14th April 1909 in which a Brazilian girl named Berenice Soares de Moura was diagnosed with the disease by Dr. Carlos Ribeiro Justiniano Chagas. She was the first patient who was diagnosed with this disease, which is also known as American Trypanosomiasis. Chagas Disease is an Infection caused by a tropical parasite in the faeces of the Triatomine bug or Kissing bug and fever, large lymph nodes, headache, malaise and enlargement of the liver and spleen are its symptoms. If the disease goes untreated then it may lead to complications such as heart failure, enlarged oesophagus and colon. Benznidazole and Nurtimox are the recommended medication for it.

Raghuram Rajan: A Member of External Advisory Group of IMF

The International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva included former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Raghuram Rajan and 11 others to its new External Advisory Group. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Former finance minister of Nigeria) ; 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 United Nations Deputy Secretary General); Feike Sijbesma (Former Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Royal Dutch State Mines (DSM)) ; Ana Botin (Group executive chairman, Santander) ; Carmen Reinhart (Professor, Harvard University) ; Mohamed A. El-Erian (Chief economic adviser, Allianz) ; Scott Minerd (Chief investment officer, Guggenheim Investments) and Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda (chair of ActionAid International) are other members of the group who will give perspectives on key developments, policy issues, policy responses to the exceptional challenges the world now faces due to the coronavirus pandemic and its economic impact.

Kerala: The First State To Implement Clinical Trial Plasma Therapy Treatment

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has given nod to Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala to begin clinical trial convalescent plasma therapy treatment and with this it has become the first state to do so. In this technique blood plasma of patients who have completely recovered from COVID- 19 is used for treatment of other affected patients as such blood is said to be rich in antibodies. In China and the United States some small studies have been carried out regarding this therapy which were published in a report in Journal of American Medical Association of a pilot study.

Herbal dewormer “wormivet” for livestock owners

Recently National Innovation Foundation India (NIF) has developed “wormivet” a native herbal medication (dewormer) in form of commercial product for livestock owners as an alternative to chemical method of treatment of worms. This dewormer is meant to treat endoparasite (worm) infestation among livestock which was found to be unique. NIF promoted development of this commercial product ‘Wormivet’ via Rakesh Pharmaceuticals, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The patent for this dewormer was filed in 2007 and was granted in the name of Harshadbhai Patel on 29th November, 2016. Internal parasites cause diarrhoea, loss in body weight, anaemia, reproductive health concern thereby limiting productivity and growth of livestock. This dewormer will prevent livestock from these situations.

UGC in COVID-19 Scenario

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has constituted 2 expert committees to look after the examinations & academic calendar, and to promote online learning amidst the lockdown due to COVID-19 on 12th April 2020. A seven member committee headed by the Vice-chancellor of the Central University of Haryana- R.C. Kuhad will look into the examination & academic calendar of students as Indian education system is experiencing a standstill due to suspended classes, postponed examinations, and closed campuses. It will publish guidelines for universities as per UGC. The second committee is concerned with the students, teachers and the education system as a whole and will promote online education.

The intranasal vaccine ‘CoroFlu’

A leading vaccines & bio-therapeutics manufacturers in India, Bharat Biotech collaborated with US FluGen Inc & US virologists of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Wisconsin to develop intranasal vaccine for coronavirus ‘CoroFlu’. The vaccine will be developed on the basis of FluGen’s flu vaccine known as M2SR, which is a self-limited version of influenza virus, which induces an immune response against the flu. FluGen’s lab will insert gene sequences from SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19, into M2SR in order to enable the novel vaccine to induce immunity against the coronavirus. This vaccine will be administered via the nose to the mucosal layer of the corona patients. The company will produce 300 million doses if the test proves successful. Pharma majors viz. Ahmedabad (Gujarat) -based Zydus Cadila and Pune (Maharashtra)-based Serum Institute have also been involved in the process to make vaccines against corona.

Nasal passage gel via IIT Bombay

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has approved the funding of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay team for development of a Nasal passage gel to curb transmission of the Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus. The proposed gel is particularly meant to protect for the front-line workers, health care workers & asymptomatic (without symptoms) persons and it will be ready in about 9 months. This solution is likely to protect the safety of health workers as well as will reduce community transmission, helping disease management and to provide an extra layer of defense. The team is planning a 2 split approach for this in which the first step virus will not be allowed to bind with the host cells of the lungs and thus it will prevent replication of viruses. In the second step the trapped virus will be inactivated by incorporating the biological molecules in a similar way to that of detergents which will lead to development of Nasal passage gel.

IndiGrid will buy Gurgaon-Palwal Transmission Limited

India's first Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) in the power sector, IndiGrid will purchase Gurgaon-Palwal Transmission Limited (GPTL), which is worth Rs 1,080 crore. Under Inter State Transmission Scheme (ISTS) network, GPTL has 3 Gas Insulated Substations (GIS) totaling 3,000 Mega Volt Ampere (MVA) and 270 circuit kilometers of 400 KiloVolt (KV) transmission lines spread across Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. This acquisition will ensure reliable power supply in the region to reduce carbon emissions by reducing dependence on diesel production sets. After this acquisition, IndiGrid's Assets Under Management will increase by 10% to USD 1.75 billion. Besides this, IndiGrid is also planning to acquire solar projects with strong power purchase agreements, operational track record and financially strong counter parties or off-takers.

Flipkart tied up with ICICI lombard & Go Digit

An e-commerce marketplace, Flipkart Private Limited partnered with ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited and Go Digit General Insurance to start two health insurance policies viz. 'Covid-19 Protection Cover' & 'Digit Illness Group Insurance' to cover coronavirus (COVID-19) on its platform. The policies provide an easy claim, hospitalisation, room or intensive care unit expenditure, ambulance assistance and teleconsultation and do not require any medical testing at the time of purchase. ICICI Lombard offers COVID-19 protection cover worth Rs. 25,000 to Covid 19 positive customers, that has been priced at an annual premium of Rs 159. While the Digit Illness Group Insurance cover offers consumers the benefit of hospitalization of up to Rs 1 lakh with an annual premium of Rs 511. The policy includes 30 days pre-hospitalization and 60 days post-hospitalization fee. Policyholders can also get 1% of the sum assured for ambulance assistance.

Bharti AXA Life Insurance welcomed Parag Raja

Bharti AXA Life Insurance Company appointed Parag Raja as the new Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer on 8th April 2020. However, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) is yet to approve this appointment. Parag Raja will take place of Vikas Seth. History reveals that Raja worked in Capacity of the Chief Distribution Officer at Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance (ABSLI) and looked into planning & executing the strategic direction for cementing the company's footprint across India. Being one of the founding members of Max Life Insurance, he served the company for 15 long years. The appointee has a rich work experience of 21 years, including 19 years in the life insurance industry.

DRDO is looking for full face shield for healthcare personnel

An agency of the Government of India responsible for military's research and development, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has tied up with Wipro 3D team to create a full face shield for healthcare personnel, who are treating coronavirus patients. This will shield the healthcare personnel from direct infection. Prior to this, DRDO had produced masks, full-body suits and many Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for medical staff including doctors having a specific type of fabric with coating. Besides this, DRDO is also working on a multi patient-ventilator to handle shortage of key equipment for corona victims.

Larsen & Toubro earned a big contract from Indian Army

Indian multinational conglomerate company, Larsen & Toubro Limited received a large order from the Indian Army to install Information Technology based state-of-the-art systems, which will be used to operate the armed force network under the 'Network of Spectrum (NFS)'. The Smart World and Communication Business Unit (SW&C BU) of Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T) earned this contract, which is said to be in range of Rs.2,500 crore to Rs.5,000 crore. This highly vital and sensitive project for the Ministry of Defense, involves creation of a centralised network monitoring, management and control system for all the 7 layers under NFS which connects 414 Defence stations. Having a 3-month warranty and a seven-year maintenance contract, the proposed project will probably get implemented in 18 months.

The Development of Bio Fortified Carrots

A farmer scientist of Junagadh district, Gujarat, Vallabhai Vastambhai Marvaniya recently developed biofortified carrot called "Madhuban Gajar". It is said to be rich in β -carotene (277.75 mg/kg) and iron (276.7 mg/kg). Cultivated in more than 1000 hectares of land, the yield of this

variety is 40 to 50 tonnes per hectare. The National Innovation Foundation under the Department of Science and Technology has validated it. It is interesting to learn here that the farmer scientist found that the local carrot variety used as fodder improved milk quality greatly and started growing and selling carrot on a large scale. The farmer scientist was also honored with Padma Shri in 2019 for his contribution in agriculture in terms of carrots. It is good to know that over 150 local farmers are beneficiaries of this biofortified carrot variety.

Jack Dorsey Vs Brahmin community

On April 7, 2020, Rajasthan High Court put a stay on the FIR registered against Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey for reportedly hurting the sentiments of the Brahmin community during his 2018 trip to India. He posted an offensive photograph on social media in which he is seen posing with Indian journalist holding a poster that bears the slogan ‘Smash Brahmanical Patriarchy’. The court rejected the plea against him as invalid which was filed by Raj Kumar Sharma, a member of the Vipra Foundation, in November 2018. As per the court, the FIR did not furnish the requisite details of any cognizable offence to warrant its registration and investigation. And referring to the slogan described as offensive, the court pointed out that the words could not be taken as having any direct link with the religious sentiment of any section of the society. The words on the poster conveyed his opposition to the Brahmanical patriarchal system.

Appointments in NASSCOM

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) appointed Infosys Chief Operating Officer (COO) & ex- Vice Chair of NASSCOM, UB Pravin Rao as its Chairman in place of Keshav Murugesh, Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of World Network Services (WNS) Global Services, who served as chairman of NASSCOM for the year 2019-20. Besides him, NASSCOM has appointed Rekha M Menon as its Vice President for 2020-21, who has earlier served as chairman and senior managing director of Accenture in India.

The Clause of ‘Force majeure’ is inapplicable to COVID-19

Life Insurance Council of India that links several stakeholders of the insurance sector and coordinates all discussions between the Government, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), and the public, has confirmed that the clause of ‘Force Majeure’ will not apply in case of COVID-19 death claims and it is applicable for both state-run and private life insurance players. Force majeure is a French law of the 1880s that states that in the event of any force majeure or disaster that affects the normal functioning of the life insurer then it can temporarily suspend the claims by making the contract null or invalid. This contract provision

relieves the parties from performing their contractual obligations when certain circumstances beyond their control arise, making performance inadvisable and commercially impracticable. An Act of God or natural disasters, war or war-like situations, labour unrest or strikes, epidemics, pandemics, etc are said to be Force majeure events. Digilocker is an Aadhaar-based cloud-based locker in which users can store electronic versions of important documents like birth certificates, voters ID cards, University documents, PAN cards, and much more.

Division of health centres for COVID-19 patients

In order to make maximum use of resources in the care of coronavirus (COVID-19) patients, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare proposed division of the health centers into 3 categories viz. COVID Care Centre, Dedicated COVID Health Centre and Dedicated COVID Hospital. COVID Care Centre will be built in hostels, hotels, schools, stadiums, lodges and other places where patients suspected of corona with mild or very mild symptoms will be accommodated. Dedicated COVID Health Centre will welcome patients with moderate symptoms of coronavirus and these centers will be built in a separate block of a hospital or hospital with separate entry and exit doors. Dedicated COVID Hospital will treat serious patients infected with the coronavirus. These will be full hospitals or separate blocks within hospitals. These will involve fully equipped intensive care units , ventilators and oxygen-supported beds.

Privileges of Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries

National Health Authority (NHA) aired announcement that more than 50 crore eligible citizens under the health insurance scheme of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) will be able to avail free testing through private labs and treatment for COVID-19 in selected hospitals. The selected hospitals under the AB-PMJAY can use their own authorised testing facilities or collaborate with an authorised testing facility & the test will be carried out as per protocols of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and can also approach private labs approved or registered by ICMR. According to the ICMR guidelines for COVID-19 testing by private laboratories, the testing is to be conducted by a laboratory which has a National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) for real-time polymerase chain reaction assay for a ribonucleic acid virus.

Central government's panel on COVID-19

Central government constituted a 10-member group headed by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant on the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. Dr Vijayaraghavan, PSA; Kamal Kishore (Member, NDMA); Sandeep Mohan Bhatnagar (Member, CBIC); Anil Malik (AS, MHA); Vikram

Doraiswami, (AS, MEA); P. Harish (AS, MEA); Gopal Baglay (JS, PMO); Aishvarya Singh (DS, PMO); Tina Soni (DS, Cabinet Secretariat); and Sanyukta Samaddar (Adviser, SDG, NITI Aayog) are the members of this panel. This panel will identify issues via 3 groups of stakeholders and will suggest effective measures to address solutions to the issues regarding formulation of plans for counter-activities related to COVID-19. The 3 groups are The UN agencies, World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB); Civil Society Organisations and development partners and the third one is Industry associations involving CII (Confederation of Indian Industry), FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India), NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies). Besides this, NITI Aayog has requested more than 92,000 NGOs registered on its 'Darpan' portal to help the government identify hotspots, the elderly, the differently-abled, children & other vulnerable groups to fight against the virus.

Chernobyl, radiation spikes by 16 times

Recently the Ukrainian authorities reported a major spike in radiation levels after a forest fire broke out in the restricted zone near Chernobyl, the site of the world's worst nuclear accident. People are still suffering from the Chernobyl disaster which occurred on April 26, 1986, at the No. 4 nuclear reactor in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, near Ukraine's Pripyat city. The radiation ignited a huge forest fire. The latest forest fire was within the 2,600 sq km Chernobyl Exclusion Zone that was established after the 1986 disaster. Even 34 years after the disaster the radiation levels in the zone have not normalised. According to Ukraine's state ecological inspection service, Yegor Firsov, "The situation is difficult, the fire spread to the Chernobylsk zone of 20 hectares, but more than 100 hectares are burning in total". Recently the Geiger counter showed radiation at 16 times higher than normal. In response, Ukraine deployed two planes, one helicopter and about 100 firefighters to combat the fire.

Replication of Bhilwara Model

The Union Health Ministry released a document 'Containment Plan for Large Outbreaks', that has the seed of replication of Bhilwara Model across the country to incorporate a comprehensive strategy to restore normalcy in the country along with prevention of the spread of COVID-19. Flashback reveals, located in the Mewar region of Rajasthan, Bhilwara is a textile town that accommodates nearly 30 lakh people, emerged as one of the early COVID-19 hotspots in the country, even before PM Modi called for a Janta Curfew on March 22, 2020. With time the number of cases increased and the Rajasthan Government launched an aggressive containment drive to control the spread of the disease which has now transformed into the Bhilwara model. The Bhilwara

Model of Containment is centred around 6 key steps viz. **‘Isolation of the District’** via a strict curfew under Section 144 of CrPC and sealing the district borders with check-posts set up at all entry/exit points. All rail services and movement of public and private vehicles were stopped except for police and health services. The second is **‘Mapping of the COVID-19 Hotspots’**, under which identification and mapping of COVID-19 hotspots was done within the district that had registered the highest number of cases. Zero movement of people was ensured within these hotspots and essential services including food ration, medical help were delivered in these areas. The third is **‘Door to Door Screening of people’** to identify the suspects who might be potential carriers of the novel coronavirus. And people with Influenza-Like Illness (ILI), were identified and were checked twice a day to check on their health and ensure their whereabouts. It was followed by intense home quarantine protocols. The fourth is **‘Aggressive Contact Tracing’** under which the district administration started aggressive contact tracing of the people who might have come in contact with them and may be potentially infected by the virus. Those people were also restricted to home quarantine with regular checks and visits by health workers. The fifth is **‘Increasing Quarantine Facilities’** under this district administration took over four private hospitals and isolated the patients with high viral load, which can lead to further spread of the disease among the households and even locality. The sixth step involved **‘Monitoring the Rural Areas’** under which the state administration increased monitoring in rural areas and enforced a complete lockdown by taking people into confidence. It established six 24×7 control rooms, collectorate, chief medical and health office, nagar parishad and sub-divisional office. Besides these, every nook and corner of the hotspots were regularly disinfected. Today, Bhilwara has no new case has been reported in the last 7 days (as on 6th April 2020). As per the latest reports among 27 cases reported initially, 13 have recovered completely from the disease.

The micro-irrigation coverage index for FY 2019-20

Tamil Nadu emerged as the topper in micro-irrigation coverage under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) for FY 2019-20 with a coverage of 2,06,853.25 hectare. It is worth knowing here that at the beginning of the micro-irrigation project, Tamil Nadu had just 32,290 hectares of coverage. The state government provided additional subsidies to small, marginal and big farmers through a website “Micro Irrigation Management Information System” (MIMIS). They removed 12% goods and services tax (GST) on MI components as well as offered options to farmers for the purchase of MI components by identifying 45 firms. Karnataka and Gujarat followed it with 1,41,103.56 hectare and 1,08,322.00 hectare of coverage respectively. While in terms of the cumulative total coverage of micro-irrigation during 2015-2020, Karnataka topped with 8,15,690.31 hectare followed by Andhra Pradesh (7,17,421.08 hectare) and Gujarat

(7,00,858.35 hectare). And in this index, Tamil Nadu grabbed the fourth spot with about 5,62,059.11 hectare. And at all-India level, 43.71 lakh hectare of land were brought under micro irrigation in the last 5 years.

5th April : National Maritime Day

India observed the 57th edition of National Maritime Day (NMD) on April 5, 2020 to raise awareness in supporting intercontinental commerce and the global economy as the most well-organized, safe & sound, environmentally responsive approach of transporting goods from one corner to another corner across the globe. Like every year an award called “Varuna” was conferred to those who made an outstanding contribution to Indian maritime sector. This day was instituted on April 5, 1964, to commemorate the account of India shipping that began on April 5, 1919, when the SS Loyalty, the first ship of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited travelled from Mumbai to the United Kingdom (UK).

Agricultural machinery & tea industry have been exempted from lockdown

The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued the 4th addendum guidelines regarding lockdown to fight COVID-19, that exempts shops of agricultural machinery and its spare parts and tea industry related services from the purview of national lockdown. The truck repairs on highways, preferably at fuel pumps as well as the tea industry, including plantations with maximum 50 per cent workers will be functional observing social distancing and proper hygiene practices.

India's first home screening test kit for COVID-19

April 2020 witnessed launch of India's first home screening test kit for COVID-19 via courtesy of a genetic and microbiome Bengaluru based startup testing firm, Bione. The kit starting from Rs 2,000 to 3,000 has won approval of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). According to the instruction manual one has to clean the finger with an alcohol swab and use the lancet provided to finger-prick and the provided cartridge reads the results within 5-10 minutes. The company advises people to undergo laboratory testing as well if someone shows signs of coronavirus via this kit. Prior to this, the company had also developed a Microbiome test kit to check gut dysbiosis and also genetic tests to predict susceptibility to contagious diseases.

PhonePe launched India's first coronavirus hospitalization insurance

Digital payments company PhonePe in collaboration with Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has launched India's first COVID-19 hospitalization insurance policy, 'Corona Care for people' who

have been infected and hospitalised for covid-19 treatment. For availing this policy, customers don't need to undergo any medical tests. They can just instantly buy it via PhonePe app's My Money segment while sitting at home amid lockdown. The policy offers an insurance cover of 50,000 on a one-time payment of Rs 156 for people who are under 55 years of age and the insured person will be able to claim only if he/she is diagnosed with COVID-19 after 15 days from the date of purchase of this insurance. The policy will be valid at any hospital that is offering treatment for covid-19. It will also cover 30 days' expenditure on pre-hospitalization and post-care medical treatment.

Ministry of Corporate Affairs is in action

Recently the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has launched a scheme "Companies Fresh Start Scheme, 2020" and revised the "Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) Settlement Scheme, 2020" as a relief measure from COVID-19 for law-abiding companies and LLPs. The two schemes provide a one-time waiver of additional filing fees for delayed filings by the companies or LLPs with the Registrar of Companies (ROC) during the period starting from 1st April, 2020 and ending on 30th September, 2020.

CBSE will promote students of class 1st to 8th to next grade

Human Resource Development Ministry directed the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to conduct class 10 and 12 examinations only for 29 main subjects which are crucial for promotion and admission to higher educational institutions. Further, the students of class 9th and 11th will be promoted to the next class based on the school-based assessments viz. projects, periodic tests and term exams conducted. And those Class 9th and 11th students who fail to get promoted this time, can appear in school based tests online or offline. The Ministry further instructed the board to promote students of class 1st to 8th to next grade.

Justice Rajnesh Oswal : The permanent Judge of High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Justice Gita Mittal administered the oath of Justice Rajnesh Oswal, who took oath as a permanent Judge of the common High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in Jammu. Justice Oswal is the first Judge of the High Court to take oath under the Indian Constitution as all previous Judges of the High Court had taken oath under the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, which ceased to have effect from August 5, 2019. With this appointment, the strength of Justices of J&K High Court increased from eight to nine.

World record of Chittaranjan Locomotive Works

The manufacturing unit of Indian Railways based in Asansol, West Bengal ,Chittaranjan Locomotive Works entered the Limca Book of Records for producing record 431 locomotives in the financial year 2019-2020 (FY20) in 292 working days. This is 2.15 times of its installed capacity of 200 locomotives per year. With this, the unit has broken its own previous year (2018-2019) record, when it produced 402 locomotives in 297 working days. It is worth registering here that CLW has increased its locomotive production to more than 75% in the last 6 years period from 250 in 2014-15 to 431 in 2019-20 to support 100% Electrification and 'Make in India' initiative of the central government.

India & China's 70th anniversary of Diplomatic Relations

India and China have postponed all the 70 celebrated activities including trade promotion events, military exchanges and cultural and religious activities and many more which were planned to celebrate the 70th anniversary of their diplomatic relations due to outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth knowing here that India was the first non-communist country in Asia to furnish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. In 2019, India-China trade touched 90.1 billion USD. In order to reduce the trade deficit of 57 billion USD with China, India has been persuading China to open its markets for Indian pharmaceuticals and IT companies.

The Navatatanalu-Pedalandariki Illu programme

The Andhra Pradesh government has modified the guidelines of the Navatatanalu-Pedalandariki Illu scheme that implies "Houses for all the poor". Under this scheme, house sites will be allotted at Re 1 to the poor with white ration cards. The beneficiaries will use these sites for construction of houses only. They will have to stay in the houses for a particular period of time then only they will be able to sell the houses. This flagship programme is comprised of welfare schemes like YSR Rythu Bharosa (financial aid to farmers); Fee Reimbursement (Rs 20,000 allowance for every student); Arogyasri (funding for medical treatments above Rs 1000); Jalayagnam (irrigation projects), Ban on Alcohol, Amma Vodi (Rs 15,000 aid to all the mothers of school going children); Asara (0% interest loans to backward communities, women, SC, ST of age above 45 years) and Pensionla Pempu (Rs 2000 to Senior citizens and Rs 3,000 to the physically challenged)

The wait and watch policy

More than 800 Indian pilgrims are stuck in Qom, Iran and trusting the wait and watch policy of Indian government , the Supreme Court of India postponed the decision of bringing them back home. Among them 250 are victims of Covid 19. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on behalf of the

government argued that the government is doing its best to provide them the requisite care in Iran itself. The decision came in response to a Ladakh resident's petition before the apex court seeking urgent intervention to get them back home.

Banks & their initiatives

Scheduled Commercial Bank, Karur Vysya Bank introduced India's first prepaid wallet card 'Enkasu' i.e. 'My cash' (in Tamil) in Karur, Tamil Nadu under its Quit cash movement. The card functions based on Near Field Communication Technology (NFC) in a semi closed loop & the customers purchasing this card can make 'tap & go' payments for even small purchases to merchants from an amount of Rs. 1 to doing away with the need for cash & small change. The cards are said to be unique as they can be accepted 'online' as well as 'offline'. The card can be recharged through various ways including the bank's mobile App 'DLite', UPI and NEFT or through its all 7 branches in Karur. Apart from this, State Bank of India (SBI) became the first bank to launch an emergency credit facility to provide funds to businesses affected by the infectious coronavirus. Under this emergency credit line, loan will be given at a fixed interest rate of 7.25% for a period of 12 months. Maximum loan amount of up to Rs 200 crore or 10 % of the existing fund based working capital limits (FBWC) will be given and this facility will be available by 30 June 2020. This loan facility is available for all standard accounts which are not classified as Special Mention Account (SMA)-1 (whereby principal or interest payment or any other amount is wholly or partly overdue between 31-60 days) or SMA-2 (61-90 days) till 16th March 2020.

Satyarup Siddhanta got booked in 'Limca Book of Records

The Indian Mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta has set the record of becoming the first Indian to climb the highest volcanoes in the world of all the 7 continents viz. Mt Kilimanjaro, Africa (5,895 m), Mount Elbrus, Europe (5,642 m), Mt Pico de Orizaba, North America (5,636 m), Mt Giluwe, Australia (4,367 m), Mt Sidley, Antarctica (4,285 m), Mt Ojos del Salado, South America (6,893 m), Mt Damavand, Asia (5,610 m). Prior to this, in January 2019 he achieved the record of climbing all the highest summits in the world in 7 continents in January 2019. He has his name in Guinness Book of World Records, India Book of Records, Asia Book of Records, British Book of records and Champion Book of Records. And now Limca book of records that records achievements made by Indians inside India and also in other countries has also enlisted him for his achievements.

Book 'Messiah Modi: A Great tale of expectations' is in the stores

Penned by senior journalist and author Tavleen Singh, a book titled 'Messiah Modi: A Tale of Great Expectations' got released recently. It gives account of the early support for Modi. The book also reflects helpless dissatisfaction with Narendra Modi the Prime Minister (PM), his cabinet, the story of his first term as a journey from lynchings to demonetization up to Article 370, the most controversial law CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act), implementation of National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the promises he made in his first term. In the author's view Modi is the most isolated PM that she has seen in Delhi.

Justice eventually prevailed!

All four victims of Nirbhaya case, Pawan Gupta, Vinay Sharma, Akshay Thakur and Mukesh Singh were hanged till death in the wee hours of 20th March 2020 at Tihar jail in Delhi. The executions were finally carried out after the convicts exhausted every possible legal avenue to escape the gallows. Delhi High Court as well as the Supreme Court dismissed a last-minute plea by the convicts, paving the way for the execution. Parents of Nirbhaya, who was a para-medical student gangraped by six men in a moving bus in South West Delhi in December 2012, thanked the Indian judiciary for doing justice to their daughter. Tihar Jail is South Asia's largest prison complex, which accommodates more than 16,000 inmates.

Schemes & their success

According to Union Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs independent charge (I/C), Civil Aviation (I/C) and Minister of state of Commerce & Industry, Hardeep Singh's report, Rs 6.16 lakh crore (trillion) has been granted so far under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)– PMAY(U), which was started on 25th June 2015 to construct affordable pucca houses for all with access to water, sanitation & electricity by 2022, when the nation will complete 75 years of independence. Low-income groups (LIGs), Middle Income Groups (MIGs) & EWS are the beneficiaries of this scheme. Apart from this, another scheme PM- Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana succeeded in reaching 8,69,79,391 beneficiaries. The Central government has changed the premium subsidy sharing pattern between Centre and North Eastern States from 50:50 to 90:10 to allow more states to notify the scheme and facilitate greater coverage of farmers under it.

APEDA cracked a deal with SFAC

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) for better synergy with this organization for the development of agriculture, allied sectors and its

exports for bringing better value to the stakeholders. Ms. Neelkamal Darbari, Managing Director of SFAC and Mr. Paban Kumar Borthakur, Chairman of APEDA were the signatories of this contract. The duo are eyeing to reach large farmers for improving the production base of agri products quantitatively and qualitatively. They will make efforts to double the farmer's income by linking the FPOs/FPCs (Farmer Producer Organizations and Farmer Producer Companies) with the exporters.

Karnataka exempted aerospace and defence firms from Covid-19 lockdown

On 1st April 2020, Karnataka based companies that manufacture parts and systems for the assembly lines of global aerospace and defence (A&D) majors like Boeing and Airbus, have been exempted from the nationwide anti-Covid-19 lockdown and they have been allowed to resume manufacturing activities with immediate effect. Karnataka's A&D manufacturing firms mainly have medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) like Dynamatic Technologies, Rossell India Ltd and Sasmos, who are, for certain components and systems, the sole suppliers to Boeing production lines in the US and the Airbus assembly line in Toulouse, France. It is said that Indian aerospace and defence firms believe that uninterrupted and timely supply remains critical for their credibility. Even in the US and France, A&D production continues. Despite the Covid 19 pandemic, the US federal government has ordered the A&D industry's 2.5 million employees to continue reporting for work, after the defence industry lobbied Congress and the Pentagon for a special dispensation on the grounds of national security.

“Scitech Airon” : A New Technology to Disinfect Hospitals

A Pune based Startup of Maharashtra has developed a new technology for disinfecting hospitals of the state under “Nidhi Prayas” programme. The product is a Negative Ion Generator named “Scitech Airon” that helps to control bacteria, virus and fungal infections. It disinfects areas that were exposed to infections. The Scitech Airon machine creates negatively charged Ions that form clusters around viruses, bacteria and other airborne molds and produces Hydroxyl radicals (OH) groups via chemical reactions to deactivate pathogens. Being highly useful in quarantine facilities, the Department of Science and Technology has granted Rs 1 crore to manufacture this machine on a larger scale. Apart from pathogens, the machine also has potential of decomposing harmful pollutants like Carbon Monoxide, Nitrogen dioxide, etc. NIDHI PRAYAS is one of the 9 programmes launched to materialize the ideas of young innovators. PRAYAS is Promoting and Accelerating Young and Aspiring technology entrepreneurs.

Maharashtra made major salary cuts

The Government of Maharashtra announced major salary cuts to fight Covid 19. The Maharashtra Government had cut 60% of salary from the Chief Minister and other members of Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council and other representatives of the local governing bodies. Besides them, salaries of Class A and Class B employees have also been trimmed. Besides Maharashtra, Telangana has also announced such salary cuts.

BhartPe & ICICI Lombard tied up for shopkeepers

A New Delhi-based startup involved in payment transaction business, BhartPe has partnered ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited, to launch 'COVID-19 protection insurance cover' for shopkeepers. The shopkeepers are said to be most affected financially due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. According to the newly launched policy, 100% of the sum assured will be paid to the policyholder for the diagnosis of Coronavirus. It includes all expenses incurred after hospitalization. The ICICI Lombard Health Cover is available on the BharatPe app at economic rate & offers a premium starting from Rs 199 and a sum assured of Rs 25,000 and value-added benefits. Along with health assistance, teleconsultation, ambulance assistance and many allied offers have been made. It will cover people in the age group of 18 to 65 years.

18th March 2020 : The 219th foundation day of Ordnance Factories

Arms industry company, Ordnance Factory, now known as the Gun and Shell Factory celebrated its 219th anniversary on 18th March 2020. It was founded in 1801 at Cossipore in Kolkata on this day. A conglomerate of 41 ordnance factories functions under the aegis of its corporate headquarters Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in Kolkata. The OFB was reformed on 2nd April 1979. It is worth knowing here that the Ordnance Factories is one of the largest defence manufacturing conglomerates worldwide. It contributes to 25% of the revenue with more than 90% indigenous content and a strong technological and Research and Development infrastructure. The up-gunned version of the 1950's vintage Russian 130 mm to 150X45 calibre known as 'Sharang', 'Dhanush' 155 X 42 artillery gun system, electronic fuzes, 40mm under Barrel Grenade Launcher Ammunition, 5.56 X 30 mm Joint Venture Protection Carbine (JVPC) alpha version, the 7.62 X 51 mm belt fed light machine gun (LMG) are the accomplishments of Ordnance Factories. Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presided over the 39th GST Council meet that opened the 'Know your Supplier' scheme in New Delhi. The meeting drew attention towards calculation of delayed GST payment on the net tax liability w.e.f. 1st July 2017. This was the day the GST was implemented. Net cash tax liability is calculated after deducting the input tax credits available from gross tax liability. GST on mobile phones and specified parts were increased

from 12% to 18% . Among other changes, the GST on Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) service with respect to aircraft was reduced to 5% from 18% with full ITC (Input Tax Credit).

“An Extraordinary Life: A biography of Manohar Parrikar”

April 2020 will witness the release of a book titled “An Extraordinary Life: A Biography of Manohar Parrikar”. Written by senior journalists Sadguru Patil and Mayabhushan Nagvenkar, the book gives an insight of former Chief Minister of Goa, Late Shri Manohar Gopalkrishna Prabhu Parrikar, who also worked in the capacity of Defense Minister in the Modi Government from the year 2014 to 2017. This announcement has been made on the first death anniversary of Parrikar i.e. 17th March 2020. It is worth knowing that the author Sadguru Patil, is currently serving as Bureau Chief with the Goa edition of Lokmat and in the past, he has also worked as a chief reporter with Dainik Gomantak. He has been working with several Marathi newspapers since 1955. And Mayabhushan Nagvenkar, who has been a journalist for about 22 years in Delhi, Goa, and Mumbai is presently working as the state correspondent for the Indo-Asian News Service based in Goa.

16th March: National Vaccination Day

In order to create awareness and the importance of getting timely vaccinations, the nation observed National Vaccination Day on 16th March 2020. This day was first observed in 1995 when the first dose of Oral Polio Vaccine was given in India. Vaccination shelters children from fatal illness and complications of vaccine-preventable diseases. The World Health Organization had declared India a polio-free country on March 27, 2014. It is important to vaccinate children as they can spread diseases to the other children who are not vaccinated as well as to people with weak immune systems.

The New ROPAX Service in Maharashtra

Minister of State for Shipping and Chemical and Fertilizers, Mansukh Mandaviya did the inaugural ceremony for the ROPAX Service from BhauchaDhakka to Mandwa in Maharashtra. This Water Transport Service Project under Eastern Waterfront Development is meant for the passengers for a time-saving journey and it is highly manoeuvrable. In addition to this, vehicular emission, road traffic, and fuel consumption will also be reduced. The road distance from BhauchaDhakka, Mumbai to Mandwa is about 110 km that requires 3-4 hours travel time but the waterway covers about 18km and takes about an hour one-way trip. The ROPAX Vessel is said to have a speed of 14 knots and can carry about 200 cars and 1000 passengers at a time.

The Brand Ambassadors

Several renowned companies have appointed film celebrities as their brand ambassadors. Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan has been appointed as the first-ever ambassador of the IDFC FIRST Bank which was formed by the merger of IDFC Bank and Capital First on December 18, 2018. Further in this row, Salman Khan became the brand ambassador of the world's fastest-growing smartphone brand, Realme. Akshay Kumar became the brand ambassador of PepsiCo's snack brand Kurkure as well as Cavinkare's Indica hair colour. Kareena Kapoor Khan became the brand ambassador of German sportswear brand Puma for a period of 2 years. She will be the face for Puma's low-intensity training apparel collection targeted at workouts such as yoga, barre and pilates.

30th March was birth anniversary of Rajasthan

The princely state of Rajasthan was formed on 30th March by the unification of Kota, Tonk, Shahpura, Pratagarh, Kishangarh, Jhalawar, Dungarpur, Bundi and Banswara. The Maharana of Udaipur joined the newly born state after three days of its formation. The State was formally inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru on March 25, 1948. After this Jaipur, Bikaner and Jodhpur got merged to form a Greater Rajasthan with the efforts of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. He had inaugurated Greater Rajasthan on March 30, 1949, which is being celebrated as the Statehood Day of "Land of the Kings".

NTA extended dates for Online submission of Online Applications

The National Testing Agency has extended the dates of submission of Online Application Forms for various Examinations in wake of COVID-19 epidemic. In this series, the last date of online application for National Council For Hotel Management (NCHM) JEE 2020 has been extended to 30th April, which was previously 31st March; Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Admission Test 2020 for Ph.D and Open MAT has been extended to 30th April; The dates for Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) 2020 and Jawaharlal Nehru University Entrance Exam (JNUEE) 2020 have also been extended to 30th April; UGC National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) June 2020 has also been revised to 16th of May; CSIR- National Eligibility Test (CSIR-NET) June 2020 extended to 15th May and for All India AYUSH Post Graduate Entrance Test, the date is 31st of May 2020.

The launch of 'CoNTeC'

Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan inaugurated COVID-19 National Teleconsultation Centre 'CoNTeC'. This National Teleconsultation Centre, envisaged as a

Telemedicine Hub in New Delhi will connect the Doctors across the country to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in real time for treatment of the COVID-19 patients. Conceptualised by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, the centre has been made operational at AIIMS with a single mobile number (+91 9115444155) that can be dialled from anywhere in the country or world by COVID-19 treating doctors. The expert doctors from various clinical domains via two way audio-video and text communications will answer queries through this centre. For this, the CoNTeC is well integrated with the National Medical College Network (NMCN) to conduct a full-fledged Video Conference (VC) among the 50 Medical Colleges.

Mirza Waheed & Santanu Das :The Hindu Prize 2019 awardees

Journalist and writer Mirza Waheed was honored with the annual Hindu prize for year 2019 for his fiction ‘Tell Her Everything’, that talks about human ethics, noble love & the corrosive nature of companionship. The Collaborator (2012) and The Book of Gold Leaves (2014) are his other popular titles. Besides him, Santanu Das has also been felicitated with same honor for his non-fictional title, ‘India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs’ that traces the intellectual worlds of militants, non-combatants and civilians from India, who were not divided in World War I. Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature (2006) is his other famous title.

B.P. Kanungo will continue as the Deputy Governor of RBI

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has granted extension of the tenure of RBI Deputy Governor, Bibhu Prasad Kanungo for a period of one year up to April 3, 2021 on March 27, 2020. He was appointed as the Deputy Governor of RBI on April 3, 2017. He has been looking into the RBI’s portfolio of monetary policy and forecasting department in addition to his regular portfolio currency management after the exit of Viral Acharya. He has served RBI in fields like foreign exchange management, banking & non-banking Supervision, currency management, government and bank accounts etc.

RBI approved Mega Bank Consolidation Plan

Using the power under Section 7 of RBI Act, the Finance Minister of the government of India had initiated the amalgamation plan of banks that has now been approved by RBI. It is worth remembering in this context that Section 7 empowers the government of India to make rulings on the functioning of RBI in matters of public interest. RBI will implement a merger plan of 10 state-run banks into 4 larger banks from April 1, 2020. The Amalgamation of the banks had been notified by the government of India earlier in March 2020. As per plan, the United Bank of India and

Oriental Bank of Commerce will be merged with Punjab National Bank. The Syndicate Bank will be amalgamated with Canara Bank. The Allahabad Bank will be amalgamated with Indian Bank. Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank will be amalgamated with Union Bank of India.

Saudi Arabia will supply LPG

The Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on March 29, 2020 gave information that Saudi Arabia has assured India on uninterrupted LPG supply amidst growing threat of COVID-19. Being the second largest importer of LPG in the world, India caters half of its requirements from the middle east countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait. Since the time, the Government of India has begun promotion of cleaner fuel, the usage of LPG in India has increased. In the year 2018-19, the usage of LPG in the country climbed by 6.9% as compared to the previous year. In 2020, it showed an increase by 6.7%.

NEET & JEE (Main) have been postponed !

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has directed National Testing Agency to postpone National Medical Entrance Exam (NEET) (UG) 2020 and JEE(Main) till last week of May in wake of coronavirus outbreak. The NEET was previously scheduled for May 3rd 2020 and JEE (Main) exam was scheduled for 05.04.2020, 07.04.2020 to 09.04.2020 & 11.04.2020. In this series, IIT Delhi has also extended the last date for submission of online applications for PhD and PG admissions till 20th April 2020 , which was previously 30th March for domestic students and 31st March for International students.

Release of “Missing in Action: The Prisoners Who Never Came Back”

In an event hosted by United Service Institution of India (USI), Senior Journalist Chander Suta Dogra launched her book titled “Missing in Action: The Prisoners Who Never Came Back”. Published by Harpercollins, the book relies on de-classified records of the Ministry of External Affairs & other sources. The book speaks about the missing Indian soldiers during the mission of 1965 & 1971 Indo- Pak wars & also attempts to find out what happened to them, hoping to open up a debate on how soldiers are often used as pawns by governments. Prior to this, she launched her first book titled “Manoj & Babli : A hate story”. It was about a tough & rough road to justice for victims of honor killings.

Odisha will erect India's largest COVID-19 hospital

The Odisha Government aired an announcement about a set up of the largest Covid-19 hospital in India on March 27, 2020 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The proposed hospital will be a state-level

hospital having 1000 beds, which will become functional in a fortnight. The State Government has recently inked two tripartite agreements with Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Medical Colleges of Odisha to set up 500-bed hospitals each exclusively for Coronavirus treatment. The project will receive CSR funds from the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) and the Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL).

Death of Satish Gujral

Well known artist and architect Satish Gujral passed away at the age of 94 in New Delhi. The building of the Belgium Embassy in New Delhi and the alphabet mural on the outside wall of Delhi High Court are the credentials of the deceased. He received the second-highest civilian award of India “Padma Vibhushan” in 1999 for his contributions to art. He also wrote his autobiography “A Brush with Life”. He was the younger brother of India’s former Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral (1997 to 1998) and was born in Jhelum, Punjab. He studied art in Mumbai and Lahore.

Sanitization via drones in Indore

On 23rd March 2020, the cleanest city in India, Indore became the first city of the nation to employ drones for sanitization of the city. Indore Municipal Corporation hired two drones from a private company to sprinkle chemicals with sodium hypochlorite and bio-clean in crowded areas like vegetable markets, streets etc. The drones carried 16 litres of chemicals in each flight and sprayed chemicals in an area spanning 8-10 km within 30 minutes.

The #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks campaign

Amid the ongoing havoc of Coronavirus, the National Book Trust (NBT) of Human Resource Development HRD Ministry launched #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks initiative to encourage people to read books while at home. It is providing selected more than 100 best-selling titles for FREE Downloading in read-only PDF format, from the NBT’s website <https://nbtindia.gov.in> in Hindi, English, Asamiya, Bangla, Gujarati, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Kokborok, Mizo, Bodo, Nepali, Tamil, Punjabi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu and Sanskrit. Among the uploaded books, the majority of the books are children books and the other books to name a few includes activity-based learning science, women scientists in India, Gandhi: Warrior of Non-Violence and many more.

Indian Bank introduced 5 special emergency loans under COVID-19

Indian Bank launched five special emergency loans to support its customers affected through economic slump and lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic on 25th March 2020. Among them are ‘IND- COVID Emergency Credit Line (IBCECL)’ is for Large Corporates and

Medium Enterprises in the Standard Category. It has provision of an additional funding of upto 10% of the Working Capital Limits (both Fund Based and Non Fund Based limits) with a maximum limit of Rs 100 crore. Next is '**IND COVID- Emergency Pension Loan**' specified for pensioners upto 15 times monthly pension subject to maximum of Rs 2 lakh, with 60 months repayment with no concessional interest and other charges; '**IND-COVID Emergency Salary Loan**' is for salaried employees. It offers loans upto an amount equal to 20 times the latest monthly gross salary subject to maximum of Rs 2 lakh. It is to help customers meet urgent medical and other expenditure with no concessional interest and other charges ; '**SHG-COVID – SAHAYA LOAN**' is for Self Help Groups (SHGs) under which each member can avail a soft loan of Rs. 5000 i.e., Rs. 1 lakh per SHG; '**IND- MSE COVID Emergency Loan (INDMSE-CE)**' is for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), it will give additional funding of 10% of Fund Based Working Capital (FBWC) limit that has limit of maximum Rs 50 lakh. It is meant to support liquidity issues faced by MSEs. Prior to this, State Bank of India (SBI), Union Bank of India (UBI), Bank of India (BOI) started schemes to provide liquidity relief to borrowers.

Maharashtra topped in organ donation

For the year 2019, Maharashtra donated the highest number of organs that benefited 449 patients. The state surpassed Tamil Nadu and Telangana in the field of organ donation. In this context it is worth knowing that the Ministry of Health and Family welfare had established National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) at National level, State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) in States and Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (ROTTO) at regional level. ROTTO and SOTTO along with four Zonal Transplant Coordination Centre (ZTCC) of Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, and Aurangabad emerged as the top performers. The ZTCC's of Maharashtra in association with local Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) organized 387 awareness driven activities like rallies, talks, padayatra, marathons, stalls at religious festivals, competitions on organ donation to programmes for societies, corporates, security forces and police.

Latest innovations in agriculture and engines

According to the Indian Journal of Genetics and Plant Breeding publication, Pune based Agharkar Research Institute (ARI) scientists developed biofortified high-protein wheat variety 'MACS 4028' that has high-protein content of around 14.7% good nutritional quality having zinc 40.3 ppm, and iron content of 40.3ppm and 46.1ppm (parts per million) respectively. The MACS 4028, a semi-dwarf variety that matures in a period of 102 days and has a very good yielding ability of 19.3 quintals per hectare. It also features a better resistance to crop disease like stem rust, leaf rust and common pests of dryland wheat including foliar aphids, root aphids, brown wheat mite.

Biofortified varieties are varieties developed by making changes in genes to develop crops with the right amount of essential nutrients of iron, Zinc, Vitamin A & D. Apart from this, grants-in-aid institution of the Government of India's Department of Science & Technology (DST), International Advanced Centre for Powder Metallurgy & New Materials (ARCI), Hyderabad (Telangana), developed 'ultrafast laser surface texturing technology' to improve fuel efficiency of internal combustion (IC) engines. The technology helps in reduction of friction of the engines by controlling the size, density and shape of the micro-surface texture features, which are created by using a pulsating laser beam. For this on the surface of the materials, the pulsating beam creates micro-dimples of 10-20 µm diameter with about 5-10 µm deep grooves and cross-hatches which in turn trap wear debris that usually increase friction.

Retirement of Romesh Sobti, the MD & CEO of IndusInd Bank

Managing Director (MD) & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of private sector lender IndusInd Bank got retired in March 2020 and bank's consumer head, Sumant Kathpalia has replaced him for a period of three years. It is worth knowing here that the banking regulator has stipulated 70 as the retirement age for managing directors at banks. Kathpalia, the new CEO is a career banker with more than 33 years of experience in large multinational banks like Citibank, Bank of America, ABN AMRO and IndusInd bank.

Mayiladuthurai : The 38th district of Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy aired announcement at the Legislative Assembly about a new 38th district Mayiladuthurai that has been formed after division of Nagapattinam district. Prior to this, Tamil Nadu had 37 districts out of which 5 districts were formed in 2019 viz. Kallakurichi district in January 2019 by splitting from Villupuram; Chengalpattu and Tenkasi districts blossomed in geography of the state in July 2019 from Kanchipuram and Tirunelveli districts respectively. While Tirupathur and Ranipet came into existence in August 2019 by trifurcating Vellore.

Zoya Akhtar won IIFTC Tourism Impact Award 2020

Mayor of Calgary, Alberta (Canada) acknowledged Indian film director, Zoya Akhtar with India International Film Tourism Conclave (IIFTC) Tourism Impact Award 2020 for her outstanding contribution to world tourism through her cinema. The awardee has promoted tourism through her films like 2011 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara' which was shot in Spain, and 2015 comedy-drama 'DilDhadakne Do' shot in Turkey. The names of other awardees of this 8th edition of awards include Tamil Director, KS Ravikumar (directed 43 films over 30 years); Professor Shanku O El

Dorado (Bengali), Amar (Kannada), Dev (Tamil), Manmadhudu 2 (Telugu), War (Hindi) and Badla (Hindi) received awards for Cinematic Excellence for showcasing global locations to Indian audiences.

Establishment of India's first dedicated COVID-19 Hospital & Centre

In March 2020, Reliance in collaboration with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) erected India's first dedicated COVID-19 Centre, 'Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital' having 100 beds at Seven Hills Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra for positive COVID 19 patients. Apart from this, Pune-based Mylab has emerged as the country's first firm to make diagnostic test kits for coronavirus. The National Institute of Virology (NIV) has approved this Mylab Discovery Solutions Pvt Ltd for these made in india diagnostic test kits. Through the company's kit, 1,000 samples can be tested from a large lab and 200 samples can be tested in a small lab. The Mylab has fixed the price of these kits at Rs 1,200. It is worth knowing here that in the current lab based testing protocols it takes 4 hours for test results, while Mylab PathoDetect kit screens and detects the infection within 2.5 hours.

Finance regarding COVID-19

The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman made some major announcements in wake of COVID-19. It includes extension of the PAN card and Aadhaar card linking deadline to 30th June 2020, chargeless withdrawal of cash in Bank ATMs, reduction of the digital charges on trade transactions, dates for GST returns and Sabka Vishwas scheme have been extended. The Compliances under Wealth Tax act, Income Tax Act, Black Money Act, Benami Transaction Act and Vivaad Se Vishwas have also been extended to June 30th, 2020. Business regulations have also been made flexible.

The Invest India Business Immunity Platform

In March 2020, India's National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency, Invest India started "The Invest India Business Immunity Platform" to operate on the website of Invest India. The platform will function 24/7 and is meant to give real time updates about India's response and actions against CoronaVirus. It will feature the latest initiatives of the central and state governments to combat the virus and will be operational under dedicated expertise. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has tied up with this platform. The platform will also disseminate information about other important aspects like locations of COVID-19 testing, special permissions, etc.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan : The Next CM of Madhya Pradesh

On March 23, 2020, BJP's Shivraj Singh Chouhan took oath as the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh at the Raj Bhavan in Bhopal. Governor Lalji Tandon administered his oath. This will be Shivraj Singh Chouhan's fourth term as Chief Minister of the state. Prior to this, he had sworn in as the Chief Minister in 2005, after Uma Bharti stepped down over a riots case, and then later he served for two full terms in 2008 and 2013. In December 2018, he stepped down after the Congress won a narrow majority in the assembly elections. On March 19, 2020, Kamal Nath-led Congress government lost its majority in the state and as a result Kamal Nath had resigned from the post of CM before the scheduled floor test. Now the old CM in the fresh tenure is expected to take requisite measures to tackle the spread of COVID-19 infection.

The Privilege of NCC Certificate holders

In order to increase the participation of India's youth in the National Cadet Corps (NCC), the government has decided to award bonus marks to the NCC certificate holders in the direct recruitment examinations of the Central Armed Police Forces. This will be applicable from the upcoming direct entry exams for the post of 'Constable' and 'Sub Inspector'. It is worth recalling here that the NCC certificate holders already enjoy bonus marks in the Armed forces examinations. The decision envisages the availability of trained and disciplined youth in the Central Armed Police Forces and the state police forces. Now the NCC 'C' certificate holders will get 5 % of maximum marks as bonus marks; NCC 'B' certificate holders will get 3 % of maximum marks as bonus marks and NCC 'A' certificate holders will get 2% of maximum marks as bonus marks. The National Cadet Corps is a tri-service organization comprising young cadets of the Army, Naval and Air wings. The organisation provides basic military and weapons training via serving officers of the Indian Armed Forces.

Curbing methane emissions in rice plants

The Agharkar Research Institute of Pune has isolated 45 strains of methanotrophic bacteria and created methanotrophic culture. The bacteria are said to be capable of decreasing methane emissions in rice plants. This is the first instance of methanotrophic bacteria culture in India. Methanotrophs are environmental organisms that play a major role in the cycling of methane. They oxidize methane in the environment through anaerobic metabolism. The methanotrophs are used as bio inoculants i.e. strains of bacteria, algae or fungi. They fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and prepare nitrates required for plants. They also increase zinc and phosphorus availability for plants. This leads to reduced use of fertilizers. It is worth remembering here that after carbon-dioxide, methane is the second-largest greenhouse gas contributor. And heat-trapping capacity of Methane is 84 times more in comparison to carbon-dioxide.

Resignation of Arundhati Bhattacharya from Crisil board

Arundhati Bhattacharya, former chairman of State Bank of India, submitted the resignation as an independent director of the company Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited (CRISIL) in March 2020. She will take charge as a chairperson and CEO for the India operations of Salesforce, USA from April 2020. It is worth remembering here that she is the first woman chairperson of the State Bank of India, who retired in 2017. She was also adjudged as the 36th most powerful woman in the world by Forbes in 2014. It is good to learn that CRISIL is a leading, agile and innovative global analytics company meant for making markets function better.

The partnership of DBS Bank India & Bharti AXA

A wholly owned subsidiary of Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) Bank Ltd, tied up with Bharti AXA General Insurance Company Ltd to launch a complimentary insurance for customers of DBS treasures on 18th March 2020. The proposed plan encompasses all medical conditions including Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19), under which a cover of Rs 5000 per day is available for a period of 30 days if DBS customers are hospitalized for 10 days. In addition to this, the bank has also introduced a special program called 'Emergency Global Medical Assist Program' to help non-resident Indians (NRIs) to take care of their close ones in India, which provides 24 hours and 7 days of medical support.

Discovery of communication network in plants

According to a latest study published in the journal 'Nature Plants', researchers of America have discovered a communication network in plants that helps them respond to a hormone involved in pest resistance. The discovery will prove helpful in development of crops that can bear insect attacks. A hormone called jasmonic acid is meant for the plant's defense response against fungi and insects. Scientists used a widely studied small flowering plant in the mustard family, *Arabidopsis thaliana* for the purpose. They identified genes MYC2 and MYC3 important for the plant's response to jasmonic acid. The identified genes produce proteins that regulate the activity of thousands of other genes for the cellular cross communication with other plant hormone pathways.

The Third BusinessLine Changemaker Awards 2020

Organized by Hindu Business Line in New Delhi, Vice-President of India M Venkaiah Naidu presented the BusinessLine Changemaker Awards 2020 under 6 categories. The awardees are Shanti Raghavan (Changemaker -(Social Transformation), generating employment for people with disabilities); Government e-Marketplace (GeM) (Changemaker -Digital Transformation, for

increasing ease of doing business and fetching transparency to government procurement by eliminating corruption); India Stack (Changemaker – Financial Transformation, for creating the base for transformative ideas like UPI Bhim App and Aadhaar); Pradeep Mewada (Young Changemaker, for using innovative ways to end open defecation in villages); Rashid k, Vimal Govind; Arun George and Nikhil P (Young Changemakers, for inventing robot Bandicoot that removes accumulated sludge and plastic waste that clog manholes, and helps bring down deaths due to manual scavenging); Arunachalam Muruganandam (Iconic Changemaker, for creating a low-cost sanitary pad for women); Dutee Chand (Changemaker of the Year, for winning India's first medal in 20 years in the 100-metre race at the Jakarta Asian Games in 2018) and ISRO (Changemaker of the year, for making India the first Asian nation to reach the Martian orbit, and the first in the world to achieve the feat in its maiden attempt).

The 'Nari Shakti Puraskar' for 2019

President Ram Nath Kovind bestowed the “National award for women” at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi. The winners are Bina Devi or ‘Mushroom Mahila’ (Bihar, Popularizing mushroom cultivation); Padala Bhudevi (Andhra Pradesh, worked for development of Tribal People via a CAVS (Chennai Adivasi Vikas Society)); Arifa Jan (Jammu and Kashmir, Founder of Numdha Handicrafts who restored the culture and heritage of Jammu and Kashmir); Chami Murmu or ‘Lady Tarzan’ (Jharkhand, Planted trees & protected local wildlife); Nilza Wangmo(Ladakh, First one to serve Ladakh cuisines in her Alchi Kitchen Restaurant & represented Ladakhi recipes in 5-star hotels in India); Rashmi Urdhwarashe (Maharashtra, Development of automobile technologies) Sardarni Mann Kaur or ‘Miracle from Chandigarh’(Punjab, Achievements in athletics); Kalavati Devi ‘lady mason’ (Uttar Pradesh, for building more than 4000 toilets and creating awareness regarding the ills of open defecation); Tashi & Nungshi Malik (Uttarakhand, first female twins to scale Mount Everest in 2013 as well as founders of Nungshi Tashi Foundation which aims to develop mountaineering as sport & to empower girls); Kaushiki Chakroborty (West Bengal, Khayal and Thumri exponent); Bhageerathi Amma(105) & Karthyayini Amma (96) (Kerala, Cleared the fourth standard equivalency examination & became the oldest equivalency course student of Kerala) ; Avani Chaturvedi, Bhawna Kanth and Mohana Singh (Indian Air Force) (First Indian Women Pilots to take a solo flight in MIG-21 in 2018)



Japanese filmmaker Obayashi passed away

Japanese director, screenwriter, editor of films and television advertisements, Nobuhiko Obayashi died at the age of 82 in Tokyo, Japan. He was best known for his direction of the 1977 horror film *House* and besides this, he was renowned for his distinct film making style, as well as anti-war themes embedded in his films. His last directed film “Labyrinth of Cinema ”was scheduled for release in Japan on the day of his death and it was displayed at the Tokyo International Film Festival in 2019, which fetched him the honour of “cinematic magician”. In addition to this his several other works were also screened.

Rise of China’s shares in HDFC

On behalf of the Chinese sovereign wealth fund SAFE, People’s Bank of China (PBOC) increased its share holding in Housing Development Finance Corp Limited (HDFC) to 1.01% from 0.8%. With this, China’s Central Bank holds a total of 1,74,92,909 crore equity shares in HDFC Ltd as per the quarterly (ending March 2020) shareholding pattern disclosure of HDFC to the stock exchanges. Besides this, Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA), the central bank of Saudi Arabia has also taken up a 0.7% share in HDFC on behalf of Saudi sovereign wealth fund. According to the latest shareholding pattern, foreign portfolio investors hold 70.88% stake in HDFC Ltd that includes 3.2% stake of the Government of Singapore as well.

The Melting Of Baltic Ice: A Big Threat To Marine Life

In March 2020, the so-called “Least Concern” under IUCN Red List, Grey Seals are facing tough time due to melting of Baltic Sea Ice that shielded them against wolves and foxes. 3,000 Seal pups are born annually on the Baltic Sea Coasts and on pretext of reducing ice, they are being forced to inhabit small islands that they normally hesitate to inhabit. Moreover, this has led to overcrowding and disruption of the survival rates of their pups. Located in Mediterranean region, Baltic Sea is surrounded by Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Russia. Along with these nations, Czechoslovakia and Latvia signed a Helsinki Convention in 1992, pledging the protection of the marine environment of Baltic Sea.

Demise of John Prine

American folk singer, songwriter (social & protest element), 2 time Grammy award winner (1991 & 2005), John Prine died of coronavirus infection at the age of 73 years in Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, Tennessee. He also earned a Grammy lifetime achievement award in 2020 and PEN/New England Song Lyrics of Literary Excellence Award in 2016. Born in Illinois, United States, Missing Years, Fair and Square (for which he received Grammy awards), Angel From Montgomery, Illegal Smile, Christmas in Prison & Tree of Forgiveness were some of his acclaimed works among others. Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame and Songwriters Hall of Fame welcomed him in 2003 and 2019. He along with his longtime manager Al Bunetta co-founded an independent American record label, Oh Boy Records in Nashville, Tennessee 1981. He also appeared in movies like Falling from Grace (1992) and Daddy and Them (2001).

Book ‘The Art of Her Deal: The Untold Story of Melania Trump’

16th June 2020 will unveil American reporter and Pulitzer Prize winner Mary Jordan’s book- ‘The Art of Her Deal: The Untold Story of Melania Trump’. Published by Simon & Schuster, the book is based on 100 interviews, which portrays Melania Trump, the first woman to be more influential in the White House than most people realize. Besides this, ‘Hope: A Memoir of Survival in Cleveland’ is another bestselling book of the author regarding two of the three women who were kidnapped and held in captivity for 10 long years.

Demise of Indian-American journalist Kanchibotla

The Indian-American veteran journalist Brahm Kanchibotla died of coronavirus infection at the age of 66 in a hospital on Long Island in New York, United States (US). The deceased worked for several publications in India and then emigrated to the US in 1992. During his 28-year long career in the US, he served as a content editor for Merger Markets, a financial publication for 11 years and also worked for News India-Times Weekly. In his last few years, he was serving two Indian-American publications viz. the Indian Panorama and the South Asia Times.

International Romani Day 2020: April 8

Globe celebrates the International Romani Day on 8th April to raise awareness about the issues faced by Romani people and to celebrate Romani culture. This day was instituted at the fourth World Romani Congress of the International Romani Union (IRU) in Serock, Poland, in 1990. It also commemorates the first major international meeting of Romani representatives that was held

between April 7 to 12, 1971 in Chelsfield, England. Actually Romani is an itinerant ethnic group from India, that has its own language and culture. The Romani customs are called the Romanipen and for them their religion is of utmost importance.

Demise of Radomir Antic

Radomir Antic, the big name of the football world, breathed his last in April 2020 at the age of 71 in Madrid, Spain. The deceased Serbian was the only man who had coached Real Madrid, Atletico and Barcelona. Born in Zitiste, Serbia, Antic managed Atletico on three separate occasions, winning the league and cup double in 1995-96 and was one of two persons to coach EL Clasico rivals Real and Barca during his career after Enrique Fernandez Viola. He coached Real Madrid (March 1991 to January 1992). He was incharge of Barcelona in 2003 and managed Real Zaragoza, Real Oviedo, Celta Vigo and the Serbia national team at the 2010 World Cup.

Demise of 'James Bond' girl Honor Blackman

One of the memorable co-stars of the early James Bond 1960s films, Honor Blackman breathed her last on 7th April 2020 in Lewes, Sussex, England at the age of 94. Honor Blackman came into limelight in her late 30s after playing legendary Bond girl Pussy Galore's role in the 1964 movie Goldfinger. She also played the goddess Hera in the 1963 film "Jason and the Argonauts" and appeared in "Bridget Jones's Diary". She was also popular for her Cathy Gale role in 1960s Television (TV) spy series The Avengers. Besides these, she had guest appearances on other TV shows like "Doctor Who", "Colombo" and "Coronation Street".

The Coral Bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef

The central, the northern and the large parts of the southern sectors of the Great Barrier Reef in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia are in grip of the worst coral bleaching due to rising temperature. Recently researchers from James Cook University presented a comprehensive survey that showed the rising temperature had caused the third mass bleaching of the 2300 km reef system(large southern sector) in just 5 years. The first bleaching was observed in 1998, which was the hottest year on record. The continuous rise in the temperature resulted in increased frequency of coral bleaching that gave less time to coral to recover. It is worth knowing here that the Great barrier reef, which is the largest Coral reef system composed of more than 2900 individual coral reefs is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms. It is estimated to be \$4 billion a year in the tourism economy of Australia that is now on verge of losing its world heritage status.

North Macedonia became the 30th member of NATO

The Republic of North Macedonia has been inducted officially as the 30th and newest member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 27, 2020. The country gained this membership after North Macedonia's 2017 deal with Greece under which the former changed its name from Macedonia (a name same as Greek province). After this Greece dropped objections to its NATO and European Union (EU) memberships. North Macedonia was granted a protocol on accession to NATO membership in February last year. NATO guarantees the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.

Demise of Joseph Lowery

America's civil rights leader Joseph Lowery breathed his last at the age of 98 years on March 28, 2020 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. He was a close associate of Martin Luther King in the US civil rights movement of the 1960s. He was the co-founder of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and was nicknamed as the "dean" of the civil rights movement. He had received the "Presidential Medal of Freedom", which is the nation's highest civilian honour, by former President Barack Obama in 2009.

US announced \$174 mn aid to 64 countries for COVID-19

The United States of America announced an additional USD 174 million financial assistance to 64 most at-risk countries which includes USD 2.9 million to India as a support for combating the coronavirus pandemic. India will invest this amount in preparing laboratory systems, activate case finding and event-based surveillance, and support technical experts for response and preparedness, etc. In February 2020 also the USA provided 100 million aid for the same purpose. This financial aid is part of a larger American global response package across multiple departments and agencies including the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is worth recalling here that the US is the world leader in global health.

French comic book artist, scriptwriter, the co-creator and illustrator of the "Asterix and Obelix" comics, Albert Uderzo breathed his last in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France in March 2020. The Asterix series was extended into 38 books and the latest was "Asterix and the Chieftain's Daughter", whose 1.6 million copies were sold in France alone in 2019 and it topped the best-seller lists. This series has been translated into 111 languages & dialects, including Latin and Ancient Greek. Albert along with his fellow Frenchman and writer Rene Goscinny gave life to the French-Belgian comics magazine Pilote. Both of them were said to be founding fathers of modern comics.

The Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship 2020

A private foundation based in Palo Alto, California, Skoll Foundation presented the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship 2020 to Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) (United States, Founder-Tiana Epps-Johnson, Donny Bridges, and Whitney May); Glasswing International (Central America, Founder- Celina de Sola and Ken Baker); International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT)(Founder-Drew Kodjak); Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)(Founder-Drew Sullivan and Paul Radu) and ARMMAN(India, Founder-Dr. Aparna Hegde) for working towards a change on the world's most pressing problems related to Environmental Sustainability, Education, Economic Opportunity, Health, Peace and Human Rights, and Sustainable Markets etc. It is worth knowing that ARMMAN was the only organization from Asia and Africa, selected among 700 organizations. It has been felicitated for implementing the largest mobile health programs in the world viz. Kilkari and mMitra, to provide preventive care information weekly to pregnant women and mothers with children up to the age of one. Tata Trusts is supporting both these programmes. Each of these organizations received prize money of USD 1.5 million investment.

India - France joint patrols

In March 2020, in order to maintain the security of international maritime routes for trade and communications, India & France for the first time conducted joint patrols of the Reunion Island via P-8I aircraft. It is worth learning here that P-8A Poseidon which was designed by Boeing is a long-range anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW) is used in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions. The P-8s Indian variant is referred to as P-8I, which is not only responsible for coastal patrol but also used for other important tasks such as search and rescue, anti-piracy, and other military support. Besides this, under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and broader maritime cooperation, the Indian Navy has recently conducted joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance with Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius as well as Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT) with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia.

The Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit

Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud hosted the Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit through video conference, which led discussions about the challenges created by the COVID-19 and plans regarding global coordinated response against it. As per the latest available data, 90% of the coronavirus cases and 88% of deaths occurred in G20 countries. The summit decided to inject more than USD 5 trillion into the global economy to face the social and economic impact of COVID-19. And participating nations pledged to contribute in the WHO led COVID-19

Solidarity Response Fund on a voluntary basis. WHO has plans of delivering medical supplies, diagnostic tools, treatments, medicines and vaccines. The G20 nations have agreed to minimize the economic and social cost of the pandemic by using available policy tools for restoration of global growth and market stability. The Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting and G20 Sherpas Meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic were held immediately after this summit that decided to develop an action plan.

The US Space Force's First National Mission

On March 26, 2020, a new division of the US Army, US Space Force launched hyper-secure military communications satellite, 'The Lockheed Martin Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellite' via Atlas V551 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida. The satellite is meant to provide a global, communicable, protected communications capability for tactical, command and tactical warfare operating on the ground, maritime and aerial platforms. Besides these, the satellite will also serve as a lifeline of the US military force in nuclear warfare. It has a low probability of encryption, interception and detection and is jammer-resistant and has the potential of penetrating electromagnetic interference caused by nuclear weapons.

Demise of Mahmoud Jibril el-Warfally

Former Prime Minister of Libya Mahmoud Jibril el-Warfally died of coronavirus infection at the age of 67 years in Cairo, Egypt. Initially he served as an economic advisor to the Gaddafi government in its final years, before joining the revolution in 2011. Later he headed the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC) and made several trips abroad to rally European and US support for the rebels against Gaddafi. The NATO backed Libyan rebel government eventually succeeded in overthrowing longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Jibril was the interim Prime Minister of Libya for almost a year during the Libyan Civil War in 2011 until the country conducted its first free elections in four decades in 2012.

April 5 : International Day of Conscience 2020

Globe observed the first edition of International Day of Conscience to recognize the need to establish stability, well-being, peaceful and friendly relations on the basis of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, irrespective of race, gender, language or religion as well as to remind people to self-reflect, follow their conscience, conduct the right things. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution on 31st July 2019 titled- "Promoting the Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience" in its 73rd session and instituted 5th April as the

International Day of Conscience. It is worth remembering here that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was the brain behind the concept of peace culture that emerged in July 1989.

Books on COVID-19

May 2020 will witness the release of two new books providing better understanding of COVID-19. One is “How Contagion Works: Science, Awareness and Community in Times of Global Crisis” by Italian physicist Paolo Giordano that explains how contagion works and why people should limit their exposure to the outside world. And another one is “Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs” by epidemiologist Michael Osterholm and author Mark Olshaker. It is a high scientific drama, a chronicle of medical mystery and discovery, a reality check and a practical plan of action. Hachette, United States (US) is publishing these books. It is worth remembering here that author Paolo Giordano’s first novel, “The Solitude of Prime Numbers”, was translated into more than 40 languages worldwide and it fetched him the Premio Strega, the most prestigious Italian literary award.

The First human base camp on Moon’s South Pole

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) revealed its plan of establishing ‘Artemis’, the first human base camp on Moon’s South Pole by 2024 via a 13-page report titled “NASA’s Plan for Sustained Lunar Exploration and Development”. The report has been submitted to the National Space Council, an advisory group to United States (US) President Donald Trump, chaired by Vice President Mike Pence. The Artemis aims to land the first woman and next man on the moon by 2024. The report supplies information on how the space agency will accomplish the 2024 moon landing mission. Further there is a plan of one to two-month stay at the South Pole of the moon to learn more about it and the universe. Artemis will be equipped with all the necessary infrastructure for power, waste disposal and communications, besides radiation shielding and a landing pad. The mission will be carried out collectively by NASA, European Space Agency (ESA), the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Canadian Space Agency (CSA) and the Australian Space Agency (ASA).

COVID-19 self-screening bot, “Clara”

The US Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has tied up with CDC Foundation and Microsoft’s Azure healthcare bot service to introduce an Artificial Intelligence based bot named “Clara” [the coronavirus self-checker]. The self-assessment robot can quickly find the symptoms and risk factors for people worried about infection and also gives information like the need for

medical tests, contacting a medical provider, managing the illness safely from home etc. Besides the USA, Apollo hospitals of India have also introduced a similar self-assessment test, 'Coronavirus Risk scan', to learn the risk level of getting the infection. In this series, Goa tied up with United States-based healthcare data analytics company, Innovaccor Inc to launch an assessment tool for COVID-19, 'Test Yourself Goa', which is accessible in English, Konkani & Hindi, also works on Smartphones. It is an online portal that enables people to check themselves from their home, by answering questions like Name, contact number, location, recent travel to high-risk countries, information on self-quarantine, symptoms such as fever, cough, wheezing, and any health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension among others. With this, Goa became the first state of India to do so.

Sri Lanka contributed \$5 mn to SAARC corona emergency fund

The government of Sri Lanka on March 23, 2020 pledged to contribute \$5 million to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Corona Emergency Fund. This announcement came a day after the governments of Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan announced their respective contributions to the fund. Before this, Maldives & Bhutan also pledged to provide \$200,000 and 100,000\$ respectively. Now Pakistan is the only SAARC nation left to contribute to the fund. It is worth registering here that in addition to monetary assistance, India also provided material assistance in the forms of masks, gloves and disinfectants worth \$1 million in the wake of the outbreak of Covid-19.

International Day for the Right to the Truth

On 24th March 2020, the globe paid tribute to Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered on March 24, 1980 through observance of International Day for the Right to the Truth regarding gross human rights violations and for the dignity of victims. The aim of this observation was honoring those who have dedicated & lost their lives in struggle to promote & protect human rights for all. The martyr Archbishop was actively involved in condemning human rights violations of the most vulnerable people, defending the principles of protecting lives and encouraging humanitarianism and resistance to all forms of violence. The United Nations instituted this day in 2010.

Author Ruchika Tomar : The PEN/Hemingway Awardee 2020

The Indian-origin American author Ruchika Tomar booked the PEN/Hemingway Award on her name for her 1st novel (debut) "A Prayer for Travelers". Her novel portrays the friendship of two women which grows complicated until the relationship breaks apart, and one of the friends

disappears. It was published in 2019. Coming from California, she is presently working as a lecturer at Stanford University. With this, she has joined the row of previous awardees of this prestigious prize viz. Marilynne Robinson, Edward P. Jones, Jhumpa Lahiri, Colson Whitehead, Tommy Orange, Jennifer Haigh, ZZ Packer, George Saunders, Ha Jin, Yiyun Li, Teju Cole, and Ottessa Moshfegh. It is worth registering here that this award was founded by Mary Hemingway in 1976 in honor of her late husband Ernest Hemingway, who was an eminent American journalist, novelist, short-story writer, and sportsman. The award acknowledges the debut novel of extraordinary merit by an American author, who has never published a full-length book of fiction before. Madeline fitch (novel -Stay and Fight) & Regina Porter(novel -The Travelers) were runner ups for this award.

The US- Pakistan row over journalist Daniel Pearl murder case

The United States has censured a Pakistani court for overturning the death sentence of 46-year-old British-born top al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh to seven years imprisonment. He was convicted in the abduction and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi in 2002 in context to the 9/11 terror attack. The Sindh High Court found Sheikh guilty of the lesser charge of kidnapping and besides this, the court also acquitted three others who were previously convicted. According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Commissioner Anurima Bhargava, the verdict reflects not only the lack of accountability for Pearl's murder but also the misplaced priorities of the Pakistani legal system. The 38-year-old South Asia Bureau Chief for The Wall Street Journal, Daniel Pearl, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story on the alleged links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda. It is worth recalling here that Sheikh was freed by India along with Jaish-e-Mohammed founder Masood Azhar in Kandahar in December 1999, in exchange for the passengers of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 that was hijacked by a group of Pakistani terrorists.

UNGA adopted 'Global solidarity to fight the COVID-19' resolution

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution– 'Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)' on April 3, 2020. It was co-sponsored by 188 nations including India to give impetus to international cooperation so as to mitigate and defeat the pandemic which includes exchange of information, scientific knowledge & best practices in accordance with the guidelines that were recommended by the World Health Organization. This has become the first document adopted by a world organisation on the global pandemic. It underlines the need for human rights and emphasizes the fact that there is no room for discrimination, racism and xenophobia in response to the pandemic.

Demise of American singer & 3 time Grammy awardee Bill Withers

On 3rd April, 2020, American songwriter, soulful singer, guitarist and three time Grammy award winner Bill Withers died of heart complications in Los Angeles at the age of 81. He had been a celebrated musician for his compilations like Lean on Me, Ain't No Sunshine, Just the two of us (for which he received Grammy awards) & Lovely Day. Starting with 'Just As I Am(1971)', he produced 9 albums and 'Watching You Watching Me (1985)' was his last album. He was inducted into West Virginia Music Hall of Fame (2017) and inducted into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (2015). He was well acknowledged with awards like the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) Rhythm & Soul Heritage Award (2006).

4th April: International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

Globe observed International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action 2020 on 4th April to create awareness on landmines, other threats and progress towards their eradication. The United Nations General Assembly instituted this day in 2005. The United Nations Mine Action Service holds expertise in coordinating and implementing the activities to limit the threat posed by mines, explosives remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

Hantavirus : A new emergency in China

On March 23, 2020, A man died in Yunnan Province of China after being tested positive for Hantavirus. The symptoms of this new virus are similar to that of CoronaVirus. The Hanta Virus, also dubbed as the Orthohanta virus spreads through rats. According to Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the virus causes hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome. It is transmitted through bites of rat, urine droppings and saliva of rodents and enters humans through their nose, mouth or eyes. However, it differs from coronavirus as the virus does not spread from person-to-person and is not airborne. When a person comes in direct contact with the bodily fluids of the rodents carrying the virus then only he or she gets into the grip of the disease.

Iranian Author's book enlisted in the longlist of Booker Prizes

Shokoofeh Azar became the first Iranian Author, who got named in Booker Prize for her book titled 'Enlightenment of The Greengage Tree', which she had written in 2017. The book is among 13 other books that have been named in the longlist of Booker Prizes (annual) 2020 for a £50,000 (USD 98,000) prize, which is shared between the author and the translator of the winning book. This book was first published by ReadHowYouWant.com, Limited and in January 2020 it has been reprinted by Europa Editions. It is about the unbreakable link between the living and the dead. The

story is based on the hardships and sorrows of everyday life in Iran after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 which is narrated by the ghost of a 13-year-old girl, Bahar.

Postponement of United Nations COP 26 climate change summit

British government has postponed the United Nation's COP 26 climate change summit to next year, which was previously scheduled in the Scottish city of Glasgow in November 2020 on account of a coronavirus pandemic. Around 30,000 people, including 200 world leaders, were about to attend the 10-day conference for crucial talks to stop rising global temperatures. Global Carbon-di-oxide emissions are required to drop by 45% by 2030 to 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.

The 'Super-Large' multiple rocket launcher of North Korea

In the last week of March, North Korea successfully fired two short-range projectiles from its 'super-large' multiple rocket launcher from North Korea's eastern town of Wonsan in the direction of the Sea of Japan that flew till 230 kilometers (about 143 miles). And the maximum altitude was 30 kilometers (18 miles). It was carried out to verify strategic and technical characteristics of a super-large multiple rocket launcher. The North Korean Rodong Sinmun newspaper and the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) broke this information.

IMF's Report on Recession due to COVID-19

On March 24, 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its latest report stated that a worse recession in comparison to year 2009 is waiting on account of CoronaVirus. The IMF has predicted a negative economic outlook for G20 nations viz. Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US. The G20 nations will pretty soon hold a virtual summit in the coming week to devise a global solution to combat CoronaVirus. IMF further informs that the current shutdown has pushed the world to 1.5% downturn. Viewing this, the investors have already removed their investments from emerging markets, which has so far accounted to 83 billion USD.

Four Mega Trials of COVID-19 Treatment

The World Health Organization has recently launched a mega trial of four most promising coronavirus treatments viz. Remdesivir Chloroquine, Hydroxychloroquine, Lopinavir and Ritonavir. Remdesivir is an antiviral compound, which is used for curing EBola viral infections, was found to inhibit Coronavirus Stains called SARS and MERS. The combination of Chloroquine

and HydroxyCholoroquine which is used for malarial medications has been employed for trial for coronavirus treatment. The drugs are being prescribed in India currently for the asymptomatic persons that come in direct contact with the persons infected with the virus. And the combination of Lopinavir and Ritonavir drugs that were invented in the US in 2000 have shown great efficacy in persons infected with MERS Virus

Demise of Nobel laureate Phillip Anderson

Nobel Prize winning physicist, Phillip Anderson who contributed to understanding of magnetism, superconductivity and the structure of matter, died at the age of 96 in Princeton, New Jersey, United States. He graduated from Harvard University in 1949 worked for Bell Telephone Laboratories before teaching at Princeton and the University of Cambridge. In 1977, he became the proud recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics along with Nevill Francis Mott of Britain & the American John Hasbrouck van Vleck, for their contribution on fundamental theoretical investigations of the electronic structure of magnetic and disordered systems. He had also served in the Navy during World War II & was assigned to work in the U.S. Naval Research Lab.

SAARC Corona Emergency Fund Contribution

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation has launched a website related to COVID-19. The website features a number of Coronavirus Cases in member nations viz. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. According to the website, currently there are 960 cases of CoronaVirus in the SAARC region. Amid this corona havoc, PM Narendra Modi of India launched SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Funds and contributed 1 million USD. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority has recently clarified that there is no shortage of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine and anyone facing the supply issues is free to use 1800112555 helpline number. People can also call on this number in case of shortages, hoarding and blackmarketing of drugs, masks, sanitisers and gloves. Nepal and Bhutan have also contributed USD One million and USD 1,00,000 respectively. Afghanistan contributed USD One million. Maldives pledged to contribute USD 2,00,000. Bangladesh contributed Dollar 1.5 million. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are yet to declare their contribution for the fund.

The 2020 Abel Prize Laureates

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters awarded the Abel Prize 2020 to Hillel Furstenber from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel and Gregory Margulis from Yale University, USA for their “pioneering use of methods from probability & dynamics in group theory, number theory and combinatorics”. They employed probabilistic methods & random walks techniques to solve

deep problems in diverse areas of mathematics. They both share the prize & the amount of Norwegian Krone (NOK) 7.5 Million (USD 8.3400). The Norwegian government instituted the award in 2002 in memory of Norway mathematician Niels Henrik, who made pioneering contributions in a variety of fields. Year 2020 marks the 200th anniversary of legendary mathematicians.

March 22: World Water Day

Since 1993, globe is celebrating World Water Day on March 22 to spread awareness about significance of fresh water. The United Nations as well as several other organizations worldwide celebrated the day on the 'Water and Climate Change' theme this year. The purpose of this day is to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 which includes Water and Sanitation for all by 2030. As per predictions the water demand all over the world will increase by 50% by 2040 and to cater this demand more activities are required to conserve water. The recent efforts in this direction included the International Year of Cooperation in the Water Sphere, 2013 and the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-28). The UN passed a resolution to observe this day in 1992.

The Global Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

The United Kingdom will co-chair India for the global Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which was launched by PM Modi at the G20 meet in 2017. Presently, attention is being paid to natural disasters but there is need of focussing on building disaster-resilient infrastructure. The CDRI will help in reshaping construction and building strong climate resilient infrastructures that will in turn reshape construction in key areas like energy, transportation, telecommunication and water. In the present scenario developing countries are facing problems to balance economic investment and disaster resilient Infrastructure and CDRI will help them solve these problems. Despite of having the second highest population in the world, the spread of coronavirus is merely 0.3% which is miniscule as compared to developed countries like USA, UK, France. India's "Zero Casualty Approach" is being praised worldwide. It is good to learn that India is a world leader in adopting preventive measures to avoid human deaths due to disasters.

The SUNRISE Mission of NASA

NASA has recently announced a 'Sun Radio Interferometer Space Experiment (SUNRISE)' mission to study how the sun creates Giant Solar Particle Storms. The mission will enhance the understanding of the working of the solar system and will also help future astronauts travelling to

Mars and will protect them from solar storms. The mission will deploy six CubeSats in Geosynchronous-orbit. The Cubesats will employ radio telescopes to capture radio images of low-frequency emission that are emitted from the sun. These will be sent to the earth through the Deep Space Network. In addition to this, the Cubesats will also create a 3D mapping to learn about the location of giant particles that originate from the sun. This mission is significant in studying the sun's spectrum that cannot be studied from the earth due to the ionosphere.

Bear Bile : A Potential Cure for COVID-19

The Chinese Government has identified a “Tan Re Qing” medicine that is said to be a sure shot remedy for COVID-19. This traditional medicine has the bile of a Bear. Liver secretes bile juice and the gallbladder stores it. The Ursodeoxycholic acid in the bear bile is the curing component of COVID-19. It is also called Ursodiol. China has been using this medicine for decades to cure liver diseases and dissolving Gallstones.

JM Coetzee's Book 'The Death of Jesus'

Recently South-African born novelist, essayist, linguist, translator and recipient of the 2003 Nobel Prize, John Maxwell Coetzee completed his Jesus trilogy with the final book “The Death of Jesus”. Prior to this, he had scripted, The Childhood of Jesus and The Schooldays of Jesus. Penguin Random House has published all these three books. The author has been well acknowledged with the Booker Prize, the CNA (Central News Agency) Prize, the Jerusalem Prize and many more for his work.

Discovery of the world's oldest known modern bird 'Wonderchicken'

Researchers of the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom (UK) have discovered a fossil of the world's oldest known modern bird skull dating to about 66.8m – 66.7m years ago in the Romontbos Quarry near fort Eben-Emael in Liège, on the Belgium-Netherlands border through computed tomography scanning. The bird *Asteriornis maastrichtensis* lived along with dinosaurs for around a million years before the latter became extinct. Scientists have named the creature as ‘Wonderchicken’, which is thought to be a common ancestor of modern chickens and ducks. This finding has been published in the journal Nature & Dr. Daniel Field from Cambridge's Department of Earth Sciences is lead author of the study.

The evidence of origin of human hand

According to the latest publication of the journal Nature, a study led by paleontologist Richard Cloutier of Université du Québec à Rimouski in Miguasha National Park in Quebec, Canada

revealed that a 380-million-year-old complete fossil of an ancient fish called *Elpistostege watsoni* which had finger bones in its front fins gave clue of the origin of the human hand. Researchers employed high-energy computed tomography for the purpose. The research says, the human hands originated from the fins of this 5.1-foot-long (1.6 meters) fish because the fossil showed presence of a humerus (arm), radius and ulna (forearm), rows of carpus (wrist) and phalanges organized in digits (fingers).

WhatsApp's contribution in the battle against Coronavirus

Facebook-owned messaging app, WhatsApp in collaboration with the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Development Programme launched a "WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub" worldwide. WhatsApp also donated \$1 million dollars to Poynter Institute's International Fast-Checking Network (IFCN) to avoid fake information about the disease. The Hub will be available at [Whatsapp.com/coronavirus](https://www.whatsapp.com/coronavirus) and will provide simple, actionable guidance for health workers, educators, community leaders, nonprofits, local governments & local businesses.

Demise of Roger Mayweather

The former world champion boxer and trainer, Roger Mayweather took his last breath on 18th March 2020 at the age of 58 . He was struggling with health-related illness. The deceased had won the world champion boxer title in two weight classes. He had won his first 17 career fights and booked the world title in World Boxing Association junior lightweight and earned the World Boxing Council junior welterweight title in 1987. He was popular with the name "Black Mamba" and was the trainer and uncle of Floyd Mayweather.

The Global Recycling Day 2020

Globe observed the third annual Global Recycling Day on 18th March 2020 on "Recycling Heroes" theme. It was instituted by the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) in 2018 to raise awareness about the importance of recycling. The day aimed at turning 'waste' into a valuable resource. On this occasion competitions were conducted worldwide for the Recycling Heroes and 10 winners from several continents were chosen and awarded \$1,000. BIR supports Global Recycling Foundation, which works for promotion of recycling, and the recycling industry, across the globe. It further encourages Global Recycling Day, Educational programmes and awareness projects for the development of recycling.

The World Cities Summit 2020

Singapore will host the seventh edition of the World Cities Summit (WCS) at Sands Expo & Convention Centre, Marina Bay Sands from 5th July to 9th July 2020. Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities and the Urban Redevelopment Authority will organize it on "Liveable and Sustainable Cities: Adapting to a Disrupted World" theme. This biennial event will be held in conjunction with the Singapore International Water Week (SIWW) and the CleanEnviro Summit Singapore (CESG). The WCS was started in 2008. The government leaders and industrial experts will establish new partnerships and address liveable and sustainable city challenges, sharing integrated urban solutions and will carry out discussions on how cities can cope with climate change, social shifts and technological disruptions with confidence.

Adnan al-Zurfi : Prime Minister of Iraq

Barham Salih, President of Iraq appointed 54- year- old Adnan al-Zurfi as Prime Minister of Iraq. The appointee has 30 days to form his cabinet in an attempt to resolve a months-long political crisis. He will take the place of Mohammed Allawi, the first politician named by the president as PM-designate who withdrew his candidacy for the post. Zurfi was a former governor of the holy Shia city of Najaf and heads the Nasr parliamentary group of former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. So far, Adel Abdul Mahdi was acting as an interim PM, who withdrew his candidature in December 2019 after heavy protests where 40 people were killed by security forces.

Presence of molten iron on exoplanet 'WASP-76b'

Scientists of the Astronomy Department of the University of Geneva (Switzerland) along with the Portuguese, Italian and Spanish scientists have detected liquid iron rain on the highly heated exoplanet WASP-76b. This liquid iron precipitation is because of inclement weather conditions on the exoplanet WASP-76b, which revolves around its star 'WASP-76' so closely that the temperature in the daytime reaches 1000 ° C or higher than the night and the recorded daytime temperature is around 4,350 degrees Fahrenheit (2400 ° C) during the day. WASP-76b is an ultra-hot giant gaseous planet similar to Jupiter, located about 390 light-years away in our solar system in the constellation Pisces.

Microsoft India & NASSCOM Foundation entered into a deal

Subsidiary of American software company Microsoft Corporation, Microsoft India collaborated with the social arm of the Technology industry body, National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) to begin 'Innovate for accessible India campaign' to empower people with disabilities on 17th March 2020. This campaign was introduced in partnership with the

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department of Science & Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology and National Research and Education Network (NREN) to pay attention to technology solutions that employ Microsoft Cloud, Artificial Intelligence (AI) etc. to meet the gaps faced by people with disabilities, particularly in getting services and support in education, skill-building, employment, mobility, etc.

World Consumer Day 2020

March 15, 2020, was observed as the World Consumer Day across the globe on 'The Sustainable Consumer' theme to spread awareness about consumer rights and needs since 1983. Through this initiative, the Consumer International which is a membership organization for consumer groups around the world aims to inform consumers that each customer has the "rights to have information about different aspects of a good or service such as its quality, quantity, potency, purity, price & standard". On 15th March 1962 former US President John F Kennedy became the first leader worldwide to address the issue of consumer rights in a special message sent to the US Congress.

Star of "The Exorcist" has set down!

Famous Swedish actor Max von Sydow, who was the star of "The Exorcist" and "Seventh Seal" died at the age of 90 in Provence, France. In the acting career of more than 65 years, he performed his best in cinema and across genres in American and European Cinema, Hollywood blockbusters, television shows. He played a memorable role in a game of chess with death in the movie "Seventh Seal", directed by Ingmar Bergman as well as in the Three-Eyed Raven (Fictional Character) in "Games of Thrones". He worked with his director cum mentor Bergman in 11 films that includes Wild Strawberries, The Passion of Anna, Shame and The Virgin Spring. While "Flash Gordon", "The Greatest Story Ever Told," "Hannah and her sister" and "Star wars: The Force Awakens" are his other popular movies.

15th March: World Consumer Rights Day

Globe observed 15th March as World Consumer Rights Day to raise global awareness about consumer rights and needs and protest against market abuses and social injustices that undermine those rights. In India, the government has made several efforts to protect the rights of the consumers and early redressal of their grievances. The Centre has implemented the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 replacing the old 1986 Act to protect the interest of consumers and timely

settlement of disputes. The new Act also lays a provision of setting up of Central Consumer Protection Authority to conduct an investigation to carry out inquiries relating to consumer rights, unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements. The Consumer Affairs Ministry is also operating various consumer awareness programmes through Jaago Grahak Jaago.

The Havoc of CoronaVirus

Corona Virus seems to have become an omnipresent creating a national emergency in the USA and El Salvador. The US government has sanctioned 50 billion USD to combat the virus. El Salvador approved a partial suspension of the country's constitution to tackle the coronavirus epidemic and has restricted free movement and assembly for a period of 30 days. While South Africa and India declared a National State of Disaster over coronavirus. The number of Corona infected people in the country has risen to 61 in South Africa. President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the establishment of a national command council for coordination of all aspects of this emergency response as well as social distancing measures for the same. India has declared this situation as “notified disaster” to use State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) funds which are meant to be used only for cyclone, earthquake, drought, landslide, hailstorm, cloudburst, avalanche, frost, pest attack and cold waves. It has closed 18 of 37 international borders across Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Further, the World Health Organization has shifted the epicentre of CoronaVirus from China to Europe as the rate of infections is being controlled in China, while it has increased exponentially in European Nations. Currently, the number of deaths due to the virus in Europe is more than any other part of the globe.



ITTF postponed all events till 30 June 2020

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) suspended all the planned events till June 30, 2020 in wake of coronavirus. The decision followed postponement of Tokyo Olympics, 2020 and Paralympic Games. Besides this, the Committee has also decided to freeze the rankings. In context to ITTF, it is worth knowing that it is the governing body of all the national table tennis associations across the globe viz. continental associations like Table Tennis Federation of India, Asian Table Tennis Union of Asia, European Table Tennis Union of Europe, Latin American Table Tennis Union, Oceania Table Tennis Federation and North American Table Tennis Union. And it is interesting to learn that among them, Indian Federation enjoys a privileged place as the country has the highest members in the federation in comparison to others.

Play True Day 2020

The World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) celebrated the Play True Day 2020 on April 9, 2020, which is dedicated to clean sport. WADA used the opportunity to engage the global anti-doping community in solidarity on the 'Play Safe on Play True Day 2020' theme, and asked them to share what they are doing as branded visuals in forms of photos and videos and to curb the spread of the virus. Athletes, anti-doping organizations, sports federations, major event organizers and other anti-doping stakeholders from the global clean sport community joined WADA in this celebration. The concept of the Play True Day originated from the Education Conference of WADA hosted in 2013, which was attended by 17 Latin American countries.

Basketball Hall of Fame is waiting for Kobe Bryant

In August 2020, Kobe Bryant, Basketball player of America will be inducted posthumously into Naismith Hall of Fame, Springfield, Massachusetts, USA along with eight others. He was a 5 time National Basketball Association champion who was on the United States team that won the Olympic gold in 2008 and 2012 & also won the National Basketball Association's (NBA) Most Valuable Player Award (MVP) in 2008, a 2 time MVP finalists and earned 18 All-Star selections. Besides him, the names of 8 other inductees include Kevin Garnett, Tim Duncan, Tamika Catchings, coach Eddie Sutton, coach Barbara Stevens, coach Rudy Tomjanovich, coach Baylor

Kim Mulkey, and longtime FIBA executive Patrick Baumann. Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame is an American history museum and hall of fame that not only serves as the most complete library for basketball but also promotes and preserves basketball history. It has been named after Canadian-American physician and inventor of basketball, James Naismith.

The New Schedule of Tokyo Olympics

The International Olympic Committee and the Japanese organisers of Tokyo Olympic & Paralympic games headed by former Prime Minister of Japan, Yoshiro Mori, announced the new schedule of the 32nd edition of Tokyo Olympics that will be held in Tokyo, Japan from July 23 to August 8, 2021. The Paralympics will be from August 24 to September 5, 2021. Besides these, the World Swimming Championships that were about to take place in Fukuoka, Japan, have also been postponed by the International Swimming Federation to 2022, as they were clashing with the new Tokyo Schedule. Besides these, World athletics championships has also been postponed to 2022, which were scheduled on August 6 to August 15, 2021 in Eugene, Oregon, United States.

The mascots of the 19th Asian Games

Three robots also dubbed as smart triplets were launched as the official mascots of the 19th Asian Games at a digital launch ceremony in Hangzhou, China. Named as Congcong, Lianlian and Chenchen, they reflect the internet prowess of Hangzhou city and Zhejiang province. The robot Congcong represents the Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City. Lianlian represents the West Lake which signifies a lake full of lush lotus leaves and green stands for life and nature. The third mascot, Chenchen represents the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal. It will be the third Asian Games that will be hosted by China. Prior to this, these games were held in Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010, with the participation of 45 NOCs of Asia in 42 sports.

Postponement of FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup,

The FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup, which was scheduled in India (Navi Mumbai, Guwahati, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar) between November 2nd and 21st, has been postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The new dates for the tournament will be announced later. Besides this, the FIFA-Confederations working group also postponed FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup which was scheduled between August and September in Panama and Costa Rica. It is worth remembering here that this FIFA-Confederations working group has been recently created by the FIFA Council to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Demise of Tony Lewis

The England and Wales Cricket Board broke the sad news about the death of Tony Lewis at the age of 78 on 2nd April 2020. The deceased was one of the men behind the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method used in weather-affected limited overs cricket matches. He along with mathematician Frank Duckworth, devised the Duckworth-Lewis method which was introduced in 1997 and adopted officially by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 1999. However, this method then in use was based on removing the lowest scoring overs from each team's innings, and has now been widely criticised for being inappropriate for Twenty20 matches, cricket's shortest format, which came into being after Duckworth-Lewis was established. And since that time, no alternative method has been devised for the same.

Tokyo Olympics have been postponed to 2021

Japan's Prime Minister and the head of the International Olympic Committee Shinzo Abe announced an official postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Games by a year in an extraordinary move, unprecedented in peacetime, as the world is struggling with the coronavirus pandemic. This decision is a devastating blow for the city of Tokyo, which had prepared venues well ahead of time and with the tickets massively oversubscribed. The IOC has been encountering increasing pressure in recent days to postpone the Mega event which was scheduled to start on July 24, 2020. Past shows that the Olympics had experienced boycotts, terrorist attacks and protests, but has been held every four years since 1948.

The flickering flame of Olympics 2020

The International Olympics Organization is planning to postpone Tokyo Olympics 2020 to 2021 in the wake of the increasing threats of CoronaVirus. It has set a time frame of 4 weeks to make a decision about the postponement of the Olympics. And recently Canada became the first country to announce its withdrawal from the game considering safety of athletes and public health over the COVID-19 threats. Following it North Korea and Indonesia have also withdrawn from the game. Currently, the Corona cases are touching 335,000 world-wide and countries are locking up to curb the disease. The games are currently scheduled to begin on 24th July 2020

Wimbledon got cancelled for the first time

Wimbledon, which was scheduled between June 29, 2020 and July 12, 2020 in London UK, has now been cancelled due to COVID-19. Now the next edition of the tournament will be held between June 28, 2021 and July 11, 2021. The annual Wimbledon Tennis Tournament was started in 1877. It was cancelled for the first time during the first world war between 1915 and 1918 as well as during the second world war between 1940 and 1945. Wimbledon is the oldest Tennis Tournament in the world among the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments viz. French Open, US open and Australian Open. And Wimbledon is the only tournament that is still played on grass.

Andrew Malcolm of New Zealand said goodbye to Canterbury cricket

37 year old New Zealand all-rounder Andrew Malcolm Ellis announced his retirement from Canterbury cricket after 18 years of his career on 19th March 2020. With this, he became the second player after Ross Taylor to play over 100 games in each format. Among his accomplishments, it is worth remembering that he is the only player to get adjudged as Men's Domestic Player of the Year twice by NZ National Cricket Team, in the 2014-15 & 2016-17 seasons. He had lifted the Plunket Shield & The Ford Trophy in his first year as captain in the 2016-17 season. He ended his career at high note with 9366 runs & 548 wickets to his name.

Conclusion of the 112th All England Open

The All England Open, which is officially known as the Yonex All England Open Badminton Championships 2020 was held at Arena Birmingham in Birmingham, England from March 11 to 15, 2020. Badminton England & Badminton World Federation (BWF) had together organized this 112th edition of the oldest badminton tournament. The prize money for this tournament was \$1,100,000 and names of winners included Viktor Axelsen (Denmark, Men's Singles); Tai Tzu Ying (Chinese Taipei, Women's Singles); Hiroyuki Endo and Yuta Watanabe (Japan, Men's Doubles); Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota (Japan, Women's Doubles); Praveen Jordan and Melati Daeva Oktavianti (Indonesia, Mixed Doubles). The winners of the men's and women's singles titles earned \$77,000 each, doubles won \$81,400.

India will host Asian Boxing Championships 2020

The Boxing Federation of India's Executive Director R K Sacheti broke the news about Asian Boxing Championships 2020 which will take place in November-December 2020 in India. The venue for the tournament will be decided later. India last hosted the Men's Asian Championship in Mumbai, Maharashtra in 1980, while the Women's Championship of 2003 took place in Hisar, Haryana.

The Stardom of Achant Sharath Kamal

Table tennis star Sharath Kamal won the men's singles title at International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) challenger plus Oman Open 2020 held at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman on 15th March 2020. The professional table tennis player from Tamil Nadu succeeded in ending the title wait of 10 years by winning the tournament's men's singles title by defeating Portugal's top seed Marcos Freitas by 4-2. Prior to this, Sharath had won his last title at the 2010 Egypt Open. He had also reached the semi-finals twice at the 2011 Morocco Open and the 2017 India Open but had failed to win the trophy.



Current Affairs

1. In March 2020, Savita Chhabra's book "Legacy Of Learning" regarding was released.

(a) Ramayana	(b) Mahabharata	(c) Bhagavad Gita
(d) Atharva veda	(e) Shiv Puran	
2. Which of the following banks reconstituted its Board of Directors with 8 members in March 2020 ?

(a) SBI	(b) IDBI	(c) ICICI
(d) PNB	(e) YES	
3. In March 2020, The Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Ministry granted Rs Crore for coronavirus crisis.

(a) 20	(b) 25	(c) 30
(d) 35	(e) 40	
4. Which of the following governments launched PRAGYAAM app to issue e-passes for essential deliveries during the national lockdown to combat COVID-19?

(a) Madhya Pradesh	(b) Chhattisgarh	(c) Jharkhand
(d) Bihar	(e) Gujarat	
5. In March 2020, Lakshminarayanan got appointed as MD of

(a) Can Fin Homes Limited
(b) Cent Bank Home Finance Limited
(c) Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited
(d) Aadhar Housing Finance Limited
(e) Sundaram Home Finance
6. Padma Vibhushan awardee, has written a book titled 'Backstage: The Story Behind India's High Growth Years'.

- (a) Manoj Das (b) Prof. Jagdish Sheth
(c) Montek Singh Ahluwalia (d) H. M. Desai (e) Benichandra Jamatia

7. CEO & MD Pravin Jadhav of resigned on April 2, 2020
(a) Paytm Money (b) Groww (c) Zerodha
(d) Kuvera.in (e) PayPal
8. DRDO has developed a bio suit with self-sealing seam to keep the medical, paramedical and other personnel engaged in combating COVID-19, safe from the deadly virus. The suit already cleared the testing defined for body suits by.....
(a) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
(b) Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
(c) Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
(d) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
(e) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
9. According to the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) World Economic Forecasting Model, the global economy is likely to shrink by almost% in 2020.
(a) 1 (b) 2 (c) 3
(d) 4 (e) 5
10. America has given \$.....million to India for supply of hydroxychloroquine.
(a) 2.2 (b) 2.5 (c) 2.9
(d) 3.0 (e) 3.2
11. Civil services associations created initiativeto fight COVID-19.
(a) Caruna (b) Care (c) Karmyog
(d) Kaal (e) kripa
12. In April 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs granted more than Rscrores to all States under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) for 2020-21.
(a) 10000 (b) 11000 (c) 12000
(d) 13000 (e) 14000

13. International Transgender Day of Visibility was observed on
(a) 27th March (b) 28th March (c) 29th March
(d) 30th March (e) 31st March
14. AIIMS-Rishikesh and prepared economical portable ventilator 'Prana-vayu'.
(a) IIT Kharagpur (b) IIT Delhi (c) IIT Kanpur
(d) IIT Roorkee (e) IIT Hyderabad
15. Ministry of Defence approved the proposal to contribute one day salary of the employees to the PM-CARES Fund that amounts to Rscrores.
(a) 100 (b) 200 (c) 300
(d) 400 (e) 500
16. Former Test spinner of, Stephen O'Keefe retired from 1st class cricket in April 2020.
(a) England (b) Australia (c) South Africa
(d) New Zealand (e) Zimbabwe
17. International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is celebrated onApril.
(a) 2nd April (b) 3rd April (c) 4th April
(d) 5th April (e) 6th April
18. Bharti AXA andPayments Bank collaborated to offer COVID-19 insurance plans.
(a) Airtel (b) Aditya Birla (c) India Post
(d) Fino (e) Jio
19. Which of the following state governments deployed the 'Covid-19 Monitoring System' app in April 2020 ?
(a) Rajasthan (b) Gujarat (c) Maharashtra
(d) Telangana (e) Andhra Pradesh
20. Domino's Pizza partnered with..... to launch "Domino's Essentials" to offer everyday grocery.
(a) Hindustan Unilever Limited (b) ITC Limited (c) Nestle
(d) Parle Agro (e) Britannia Industries Limited



ANSWERS



- 1.(c) In March 2020, Savita Chhabra's book "Legacy Of Learning" regarding **Bhagavad Gita** was released. The book gives simplistic and relatable interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita and explains the importance of performing good karma.
- 2.(e) **YES** Bank reconstituted its Board of Directors with 8 members in March 2020 under 'Yes Bank Limited Reconstruction Scheme, 2020'. The 8 members are Prashant Kumar (Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer(CEO)); Sunil Mehta (Non-Executive Chairman); Mahesh Krishnamurti (Non-Executive Director); Atul Bheda- (Non-Executive Director,) R Gandhi (Additional Director); Ananth Narayan Gopalakrishnan (Additional Director); Partha Pratim Sengupta (Director) and Swaminathan Janakiraman (Director).\
- 3.(b) In March 2020, The Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Ministry granted Rs **25** Crore for coronavirus crisis. Besides this, The Ministry has also arranged dedicated cargo flights to the northeast and other hill states to carry essential goods.
- 4.(c) **Jharkhand** launched PRAGYAAM app to issue e-passes for essential deliveries involving the regular supply services, medical, banking & other necessary services. during the national lockdown to combat COVID-19. Through this app, District Transport Officers issue e-passes to vehicles through online mode after verification of the documents uploaded through the app.
- 5.(e) In March 2020, Lakshminarayanan got appointed as MD of **Sundaram Home Finance**. He has taken the place of Srinivas Acharya. The company had posted a total income of Rs 1006 crore and a net profit of Rs 145 crore for the financial year 2019.
- 6.(c) The Economist, civil servant & Deputy Chairman of the Indian Planning Commission, with the rank of Cabinet Minister (July 2004 to May 2014), Padma Vibhushan awardee, **Montek Singh Ahluwalia** has written a book titled 'Backstage: The Story Behind India's High Growth Years'. The book is about India's spectacular economic growth and its historic achievements in poverty alleviation during the 10-year tenure of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

- 7.(a) CEO & MD Pravin Jadhav of **Paytm Money** resigned on April 2, 2020 because of the issues related to employee stock options (ESOPs), annual salary and remuneration. He was appointed as MD & CEO of the company in September 2019.
- 8.(c) DRDO has developed a bio suit with self-sealing seam to keep the medical, paramedical and other personnel engaged in combating COVID-19, safe from the deadly virus. The suit already cleared the testing defined for body suits by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** (MoHFW). This Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been prepared with the help of textile, coating and nanotechnology.
- 9.(a) According to the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) World Economic Forecasting Model, the global economy is likely to shrink by almost **1%** in 2020 from an earlier forecast of 2.5%.
- 10.(c) America has given \$ **2.9** million to India for supply of anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine to fight against the coronavirus disease. Recently the Indian government had imposed a ban on export of the drug since the coronavirus outbreak hit India
- 11.(a) Civil services associations viz. Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), have created an initiative called ‘Civil Services Associations Reach to Support in Natural Disasters (**Caruna**)’ to fight COVID-19. The Caruna platform has formed a 10-day action plan with themes like ‘threads on slack’ as a capacity building programme for healthcare workers.
- 12.(b) In April 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs granted more than Rs. **11000** crores to all States under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) for 2020-21. Besides this, the Finance Ministry has also released Rs 17,287.08 crore to the states to consolidate their financial resources.
- 13.(e) International Transgender Day of Visibility is observed every year on **31st March** worldwide since 2009, to raise awareness of discrimination faced by transgender people and their contributions to society. This year’s theme was #MoreThanVisibility.

- 14.(d)** AIIMS-Rishikesh and **IIT Roorkee** prepared an economical 1.5 feet portable ventilator ‘Prana-vayu’ worth Rs. 25,000. Its automatic process regulates the pressure and flow rate according to breathing and release.
- 15.(e)** Ministry of Defence approved the proposal to contribute one day salary of the employees to the PM-CARES Fund that amount to Rs **500** crores. The salary will collectively include funds from Army, Air Force, Navy and other Defence PSUs.
- 16.(b)** Former Test spinner of **Australia**, Stephen O’Keefe retired from 1st class cricket in April 2020. The left-armner took 35 wickets in nine tests including 12 in a match against India at Pune 2017.
- 17.(e)** The 7th edition of International Day of Sport for Development and Peace was celebrated on **6th April** 2020 to recognize the power of sport in promoting social change, community development and to encourage peace and understanding. Instituted in 2013, it was celebrated for the first time in 2014.
- 18.(a)** Bharti AXA and **Airtel** Payments Bank collaborated to offer COVID-19 insurance plans viz. “Bharti AXA Group Health Assure Policy” and “Group Hospital Cash”. The former offers a lump sum benefit of Rs 25,000 and the latter offers a daily benefit of starting Rs 500.
- 19.(d)** **Telangana** state government deployed the ‘Covid-19 Monitoring System’ app in April 2020 to identify patients, undertake live surveillance, track, monitor and provide real-time analytics to the Chief Minister and state health department. The app’s technology is based on the internet of things (IOT), GPS (Global Positioning System) and geo-tagging to prevent people from breaching the law of quarantine.
- 20.(b)** Domino’s Pizza partnered with **ITC Limited** to launch “Domino’s Essentials” to offer everyday grocery. ITC's Branded Packaged Food business is one of the fastest growing food businesses in India.