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28
MAY, 2020

OPTIONAL
FOUNDATION

**POL. SCIENCE
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by: Dr. Piyush Choubey

BATCH STARTS

15
JUNE

**PUB. ADMN.
FOUNDATION**

by: Ashutosh Pandey

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29
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DAY 74

POLITY

- Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019
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POLITY

Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019

The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019 is aimed at promoting the safety and security of India's maritime trade, and the safety of its crew members.

01

The introduction of the bill comes days after some 18 Indians aboard a crude oil carrier were kidnapped off the coast of Nigeria.

02

The government's aim in drafting the proposed legislation was to keep up with India's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which concluded in 1982. India had ratified the UNCLOS in 1995.

03

06

The bill noted that incidents of piracy has been growing since 2008, with the Gulf of Aden seeing a major uptick in attacks by pirates from Somalia.

05

Section three of the bill says that "whoever commits any act of piracy, shall be punished (i) with imprisonment for life; or (ii) with death, if such person in committing the act of piracy causes death or an attempt thereof."

04

India does not have a separate legislation dealing in piracy, despite the fact that many Indian nationals fall prey to the menace.

Arms (Amendment) Act, 2019

LS PASSES ARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

1

The Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Home Affairs. The Bill seeks to amend the Arms Act, 1959.

2

The Bill reduces the number of permitted firearms from three to one. The Bill also increases the duration of the validity of a firearm license from three years to five years.

3

The Bill prohibits obtaining or procuring un-licensed firearms, and the conversion of one category of firearms to another without a license.

4

The Bill also defines offences committed by organised crime syndicates and illicit trafficking. "Organised crime" refers to continuing unlawful activity by a person, either as a member of a syndicate or on its behalf, by using unlawful means, such as violence or coercion, to gain economic or other benefits.

5

The Bill defines illicit trafficking to include the trade, acquisition, sale of firearms or ammunitions into or out of India where the firearms are either not marked as per the Act or violate the provisions of the Act.

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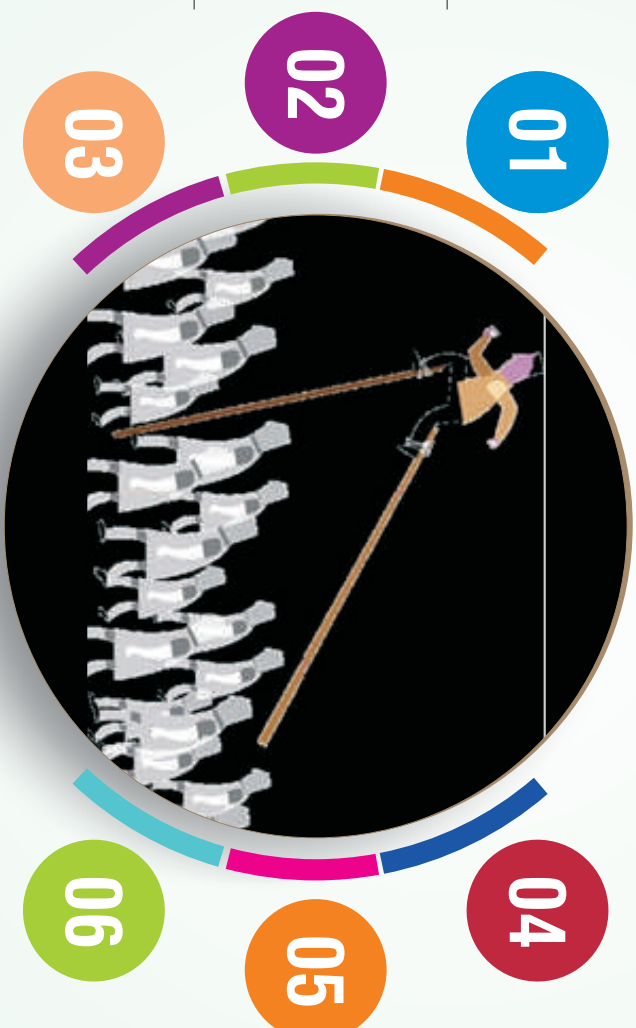
POLITY

Creamy Layer Criteria for SC/ST in Promotions

The Central government's demand for a review of a 2018 Supreme Court verdict in *Jarnail Singh vs Lachmi Narain Gupta* case has brought focus back on the exclusion of 'creamy layer' within the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories from reservation benefits.

The concept has its genesis in a 1992 Supreme Court judgment in the *Indira Sawhney vs Union of India* case.

Since then, two other significant Supreme Court judgments, one in *M. Nagaraj vs Union of India* and another in the *Jarnail Singh* case have laid down the law in this regard.



Good Governance Index



Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS)


01

The Election Commission of India has reviewed the system and process of registration of political parties.

02

The new guidelines will be effective from 1st January, 2020. Accordingly the "Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System" (PPRTMS) will be implemented through an online portal, to facilitate tracking of status of application by applicants.

03

The salient feature in the Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System is that the applicant (who is applying for party registration from 1st January, 2020 onwards) will be able to track the progress of his / her application and will get status update through SMS and email.

04

The applicant is required to provide contact mobile number and email address of the party / applicant in his application if he/she wishes to track the progress of the application.

05

The Registration of Political Parties is governed by the provisions of section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

06

A party seeking registration under the said section with the Commission has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation in prescribed format.

DAY 75

ECONOMY

- Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)
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ECONOMY**01**

The Ministry of Railways, under the direction of the Indian Government, had taken up the dedicated freight corridor (DFC) project.

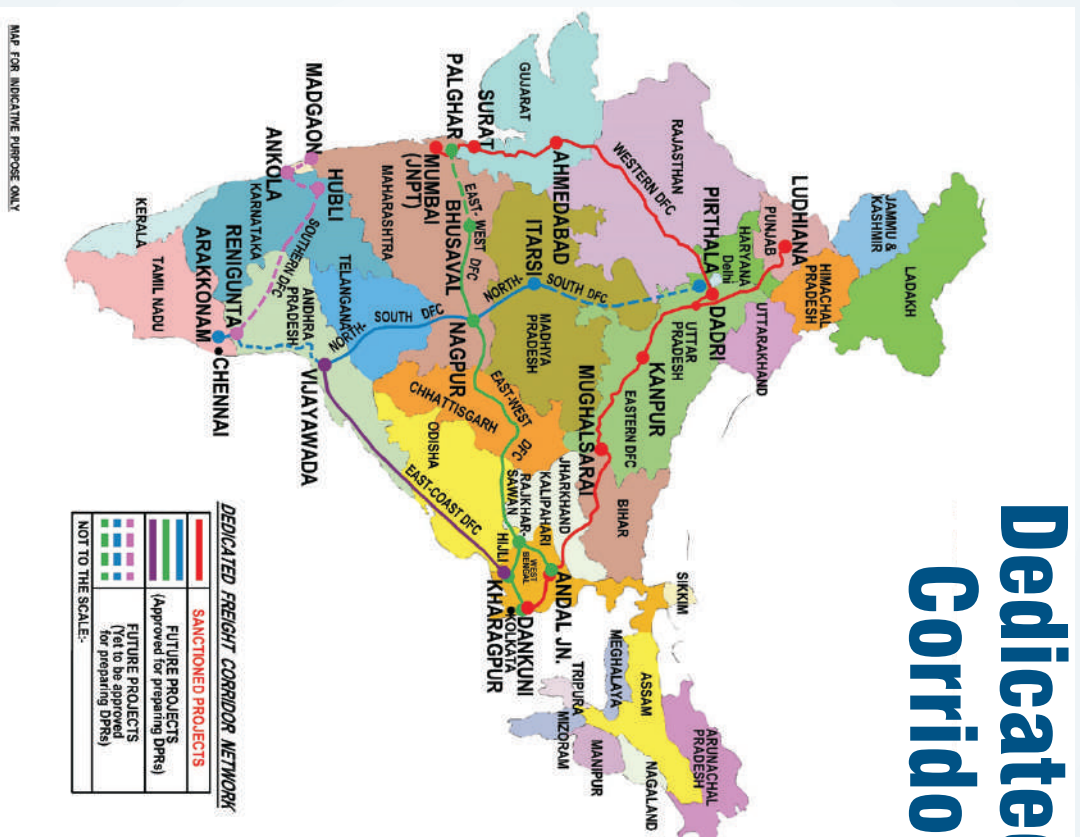
02

The project involves the construction of six freight corridors traversing the entire country. The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient freight transportation system.

03

Initially, the construction of two freight corridors, the Western DFC connecting the states of Haryana and Maharashtra and the Eastern DFC connecting the states Punjab and West Bengal, is being undertaken. The combined length of the Western and Eastern DFCs is approximately 2,843 km.

Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)

**04**

The other four corridors include North-South (Delhi-Jamshedpur), East-West (West Bengal-Maharashtra), East-South (West Bengal-Andhra Pradesh) and South-South (Tamil Nadu-Goa). These four corridors are still in the planning stage.

05

In 2006, the Government of India established a dedicated body to implement the project, called the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL).

06

The DFC project is expected to reduce congestion at various terminals and junctions. It will allow for efficient and fast movement of freight along the corridor.

Draft National Statistical Commission (NSC) bill, 2019

1

Stating the need for creation for an independent "apex advisory body for official statistics", the government has placed a draft National Statistical Commission (NSC) Bill for public comments that seeks to establish NSC as the nodal and autonomous body for all core statistical activities.

2

The draft Bill states that the decision of the central government, whether a question is of policy or not, shall be final: a proposal which experts say goes against the long pending demand to grant more powers to the NSC.

3

The draft Bill also seeks to change the composition of the Commission by replacing NITI Aayog Chief Executive Officer with the Finance Ministry's Chief Economic Advisor as the ex-officio member along with giving member status to Chief Statistician of India from the current status of secretary to the NSC.

4

As per the draft Bill, the NSC will have a Chairperson, five whole time members along with Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Chief Statistician of India (CSI) as other members and Chief Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance, as the ex-officio member.

5

The Chairman and the members of the Commission shall be appointed by the central government on the recommendation of a search committee.

6

The draft Bill stated that the central government may, from time to time, issue directions to the Commission as it may think "necessary in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality".

7

The draft Bill states that the government shall seek advice from the Commission on any matter relating to official statistics.

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ECONOMY

India Skills Report 2020

1

India Skills Report is a joint initiative by Wheebox - Global Talent Assessment Company, PeopleStrong - a leading HR solutions and HR Technology company from India, in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) along with partners like UNDP, AICTE, and AIU.

2

The report also consists of an in-depth study of employability amongst the fresh candidates joining the workforce and shared that of all students passing out this year, more than 48% are employable.

INDIA SKILLS REPORT 2020

Reimagining India's Talent Landscape for a \$5T Economy

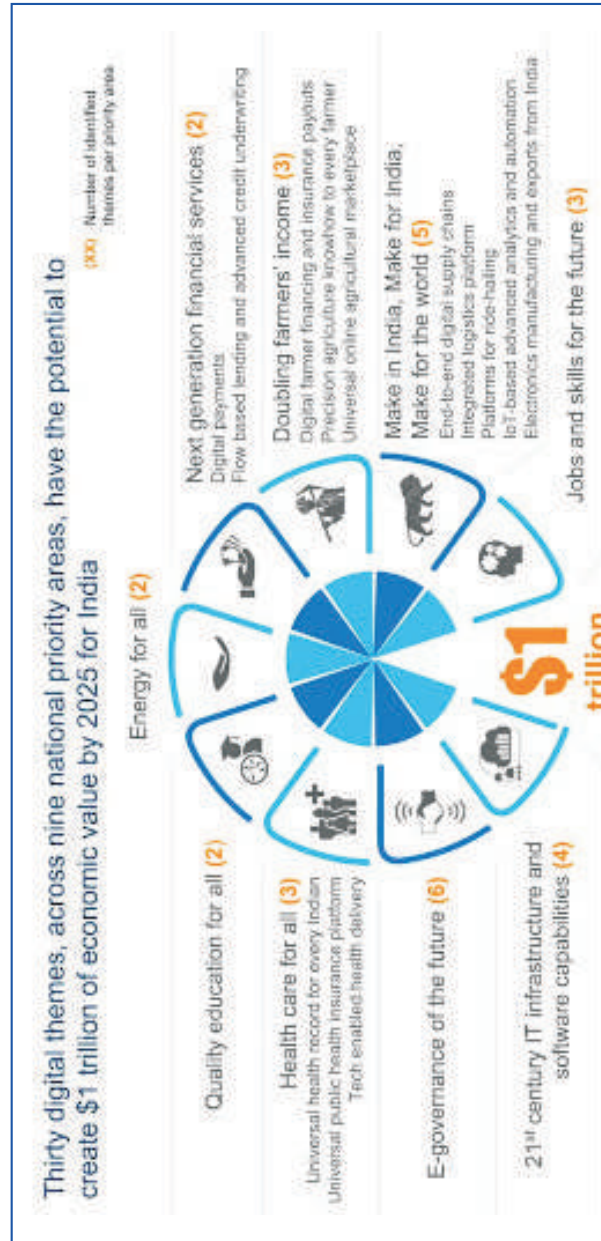
**3**

According to the nationwide study, the top three states in terms of employability is Andhra Pradesh followed by West Bengal and Delhi.

4

While engineers continue to be most employable, Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE) & Information Technology (IT) have the highest employability rate.

India's Digital Finance Infrastructure



1 According to a paper released by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), India exemplifies as a leading economy with a solid digital financial infrastructure, designed and used as a public good.

2 The design of digital financial infrastructure: lessons from India' has detailed the three major advantages of the system in India: giving a unique identity, enabling digital payments and providing data privacy to large sections of the population.

3 India offers an example of how various policy reforms related to digital finance, including transformation of the traditional banking system with the central bank (regulator) playing a pivotal role, can solve many of the challenges of financial development and inclusion that once seemed out of reach.

4 BIS, founded in 1930, is an international financial organisation owned by 60 central banks, representing countries from around the world including India. Its headquarter is in Basel, Switzerland.

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ECONOMY

National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)

The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), published by the Department of Economic Affairs, Government of India, fleshes out India's infrastructure investment requirements till 2025 in terms of individual sectors and projects.

01

This includes greenfield and brownfield projects costing above Rs 100 crore each.

02

Out of the projects included in the pipeline, 43 percent are under implementation, 33 percent are at conceptual stage and 19 percent are under development.

03**04**

The projects belong to sectors such as power, including renewable, railways, urban development, irrigation, mobility, education, health, water and digital sector.

05

The infrastructure projects are spread across 18 states and union territories. Energy, roads, urban development and railways constitute 70 percent of projected capital expenditure in India.

06

While the Centre and the State will invest an equal share of 38 percent each in the capital expenditure, the private sector participation has been set at 22 percent.

DAY 76

ECOLOGY & GEOGRAPHY

- Bejjur Vultures- The smallest vultures affected by Diclofenac
- Eurasian Lynx
- Extinct Wood Snake resurfaced
- Hump-Backed Mahseer
- Yangtze Giant Softshell Turtles

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ECOLOGY + GEOGRAPHY

BRAM Bejjur Vultures

The smallest vultures affected by Diclofenac

01

These vultures are also known as longbilled vultures (Gyps indicus). It is the smallest of the vultures. They feed exclusively on carrion and mainly remains of cattle and breed in colonies.



02

They have been listed under the 'critically endangered' category by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and have been affected by poisoning by Diclofenac.

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ECOLOGY + GEOGRAPHY

Eurasian Lynx

It has been reported that Eurasian Lynx is located in the Kashmir Valley recently.

01

The Eurasian Lynx which was previously found only in Ladakh and some parts of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir has been recently located in the Kashmir Valley.

02

The lynx is the third smaller cat species reported from the Kashmir Valley apart from the Jungle Cat and the Leopard Cat.

03

The Eurasian Lynx or Ee in Ladakhi is one of the medium-sized wild cats which roam the high and cold snow-covered mountains of Ladakh.

04

The cat is agile and strong and is highly adapted to the thin air atmosphere of Ladakh.

05

It inhabits temperate and boreal forests up to an altitude of 5,500 m (18,000 ft). It has been listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List.

06

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ECOLOGY + GEOGRAPHY

Extinct Wood Snake Resurfaced

01

A species of wood snake that wasn't seen for 140 years has resurfaced in a survey conducted by scientists in the Meghamalai Wildlife Sanctuary.

02

The species is endemic to the Meghamalai forests and the Periyar Tiger Reserve landscape in Kerala.

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ECOLOGY + GEOGRAPHY

Hump-Backed Mahseer



The hump-backed Mahseer which is found in the waters of the Cauvery has been added to the IUCN Red List with Critically Endangered Status.

12

The hump-backed mahseer is a large freshwater fish also called the tiger of the water and found only in the Cauvery river basin including Kerala's Pambar, Kabini and Bhavani rivers.

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ECOLOGY + GEOGRAPHY

Yangtze Giant Softshell Turtles

01

The last female member of one of the world's rarest turtle species in captivity has died at a zoo in southern China.

02

The animal was one of four Yangtze giant softshell turtles known to be remaining in the world.

03

It is also known as the Red River giant softshell turtle, Shanghai softshell turtle, Swinhoe's softshell turtle or speckled softshell turtle.

04

It has been listed as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List. It may be the largest living freshwater turtle in the world.



DAY 77

POLITY

- DARPG's National Monitoring Dashboard launched for COVID-19 Grievances
- Govt regulates 24 classes of medical devices as Drugs for quality control, price regulation
- National Gallery of Modern Art celebrates 66 years
- National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC)
- Zscaler Appoints Director of Transformation Strategy for Asia Pacific and Japan

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POLITY

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

01
Union Minister of
State for Personnel,
Public Grievances and
Pensions launched DARPG's
National Monitoring Dashboard
on COVID-19 Grievances.

02
The National
Monitoring Dashboard was
developed and implemented at
<https://darpg.gov.in> where COVID-
19 related grievances are monitored
on priority basis by a technical team
of DARPG.

03
The portal will be monitored
at senior levels in Government
on a daily basis.

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Government regulates 24 classes of Medical Devices as Drugs for Quality Control, Price Regulation



- 1** National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has revised the ceiling price of 883 scheduled formulations.
- 2** Government is regulating 24 classes of medical devices which have been notified and regulated as drugs under Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.
- 3** Remaining non-scheduled medical devices which are notified and regulated as drugs, NPPA is currently monitoring Maximum Retail Prices to ensure that no manufacturer and importers can increase the price more than ten per cent in preceding twelve months.
- 4** The NPPA in its order stated that all medical devices shall be governed under the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 which come into effect from today.
- 5** All medical devices shall be regulated by the government as drugs for quality control and price monitoring.
- 6** NPPA said, no unusual price fluctuations in price of inputs for medicines, amid COVID-19 outbreak has been reported so normal price revisions have been allowed.
- 7** The revised prices are applicable from today and the detail of revised prices is available on NPPA's website www.nppaindia.nic.in.

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POLITY

National Gallery of Modern Art Celebrates 66 Yrs.

**01**

In the present scenario, on the eve of 66th Foundation Day (29.03.2020), NGMA launched Virtual Tour of its permanent collection for the visitors to enjoy without having to physically visit the Museum during these days.

02

It is for the first time that NGMA has provided the facility of virtual tour of its permanent collection to art lovers.

03

The permanent collection reflects its repository as an institution of dynamic and progressive collective acumen.

04

The sculptures, paintings and prints in the visual tour are a step further to showcase the hidden treasures of our reserve collection.

05

NGMA presents this visual tour as a tribute to our modern masters and firmly believe that this would generate greater interest among people towards the legacy of sculptures, paintings and prints as a creative medium

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National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC)

The project CoNTeC, an acronym for COVID-19 National Teleconsultation Centre, has been conceptualised by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and has been implemented by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

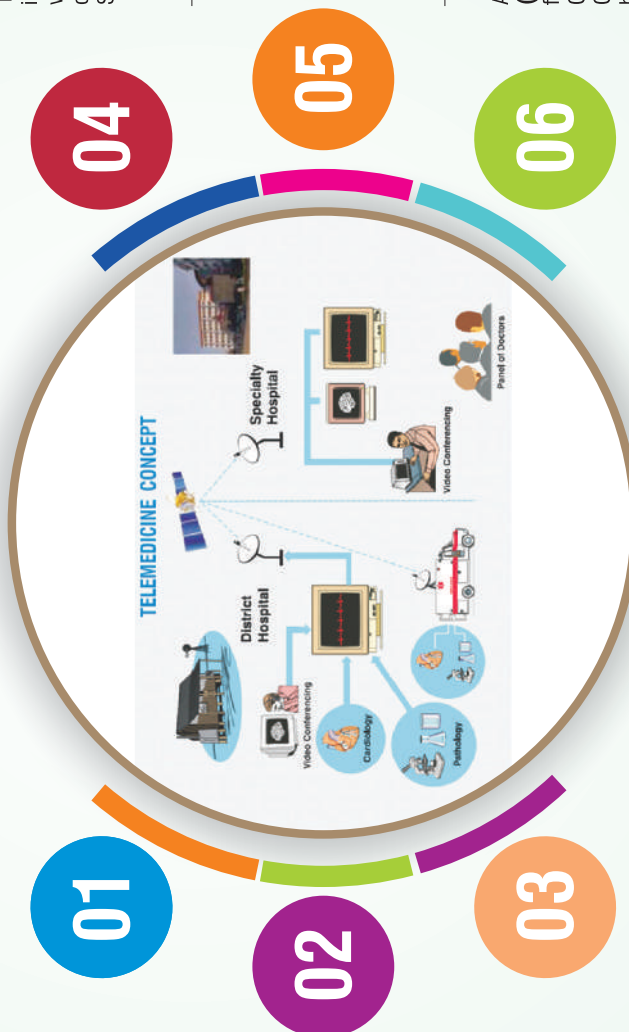
The CoNTeC is a Telemedicine Hub established by AIIMS, New Delhi, wherein expert doctors from various clinical domains will be available 24×7 to answer the multifaceted questions from specialists from all over the country.

It is a multi-modal telecommunications hub through which 2 way audio-video and text communications can be undertaken from any part of the country as well as the world at large.

The modes of communication will include simple mobile telephony as well as two way video communications, using WhatsApp, Skype and Google Duo.

The CoNTeC is also fully integrated with the National Medical College Network (NMCN) to conduct a full fledged Video Conference (VC) between the 50 Medical Colleges connected through the NMCN with its National Resource Centre located at SGPGI Lucknow.

A single mobile number (+91 9115444155) can be dialled from anywhere in the country/world by COVID-19 treating doctors to reach the CoNTeC which has six lines that can be used simultaneously at present.



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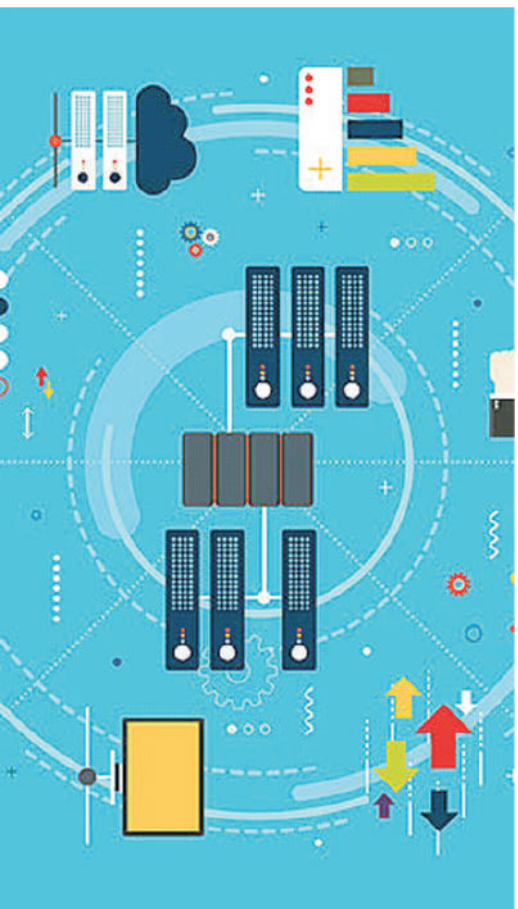
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POLITY

Zscaler Appoints Director of Transformation Strategy for Asia Pacific and Japan

**01**

Zscaler, the leader in cloud security has appointed Sudip Banerjee as the Director of Transformation Strategy Asia Pacific and Japan.

02

Based in Mumbai, Banerjee joins Zscaler with more than 25 years of experience in the IT industry and will be responsible for supporting customers with transforming their on-premise network and security stack to the cloud.

03

Most recently, Banerjee was Group Chief Technology Officer at Reliance Capital where he was responsible for implementing Digital transformation and large IT initiatives across diverse businesses spanning Lending, Insurance, and Asset management.

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DAY 78

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- **Analytics Vidhya Opens its Data Science Induction Program – Initiate AI for Companies**
- **Hydroxychloroquine now a schedule H1 drug**
- **NASA Selects Mission to Study Causes of Giant Solar Particle Storms**
- **Schoolnet India Limited and Dentsu Aegis Network collaborate to expand K-12 digital solutions in Government Schools**
- **VeneSat-1 satellite inactive since March 13, to be pushed into graveyard orbits**

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Analytics Vidhya Opens its Data Science Induction Program – Initiate AI for Companies



Analytics Vidhya

Learn everything about analytics

Analytics Vidhya, India's largest community based knowledge portal for Analytics and Data Science professionals opened its induction program 'Initiate AI' for companies to onboard data science talent for free.

The program initiates a data scientist in SQL, for Data Science, Data Visualization and Machine Learning. This online program aims to benefit more the 500 organizations worldwide.

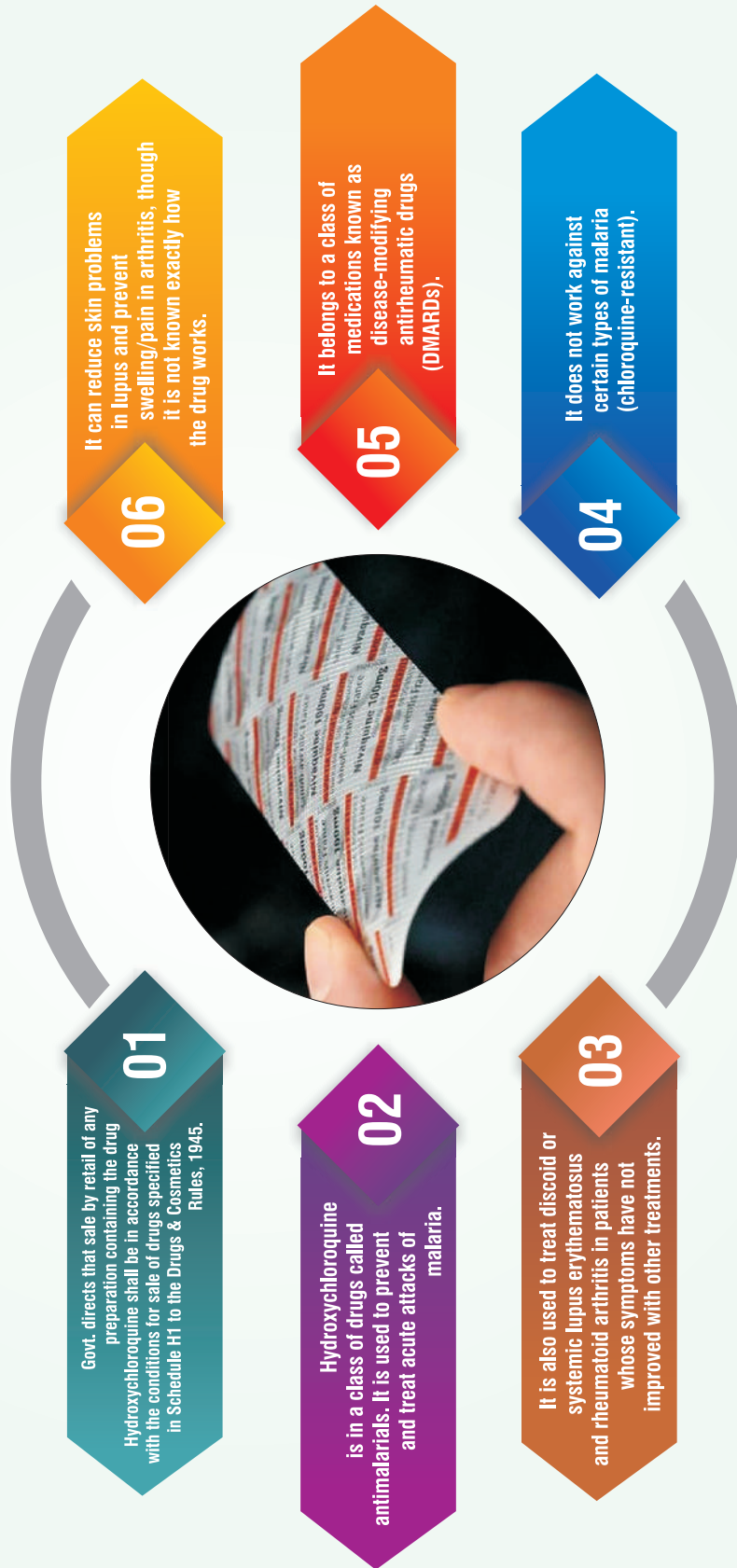
According to a UN agency, up to 25 Million jobs can be lost across the globe because of Coronavirus.

The program offers online courses, assignments and several real life industry hackathons.

- Benefits of 'Initiate AI'**
- ◉ Saves the time and efforts of HR of the organisation in training the new joiners.
 - ◉ Helps in tracking the performance and process of the new joiner seamlessly.
 - ◉ Doesn't require any physical workplace for the training.
 - ◉ Can be easily accessed across the geographies

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Hydroxychloroquine now a schedule H1 drug



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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Selects Mission to Study Causes of Giant Solar Particle Storms

01

The new mission, called the Sun Radio Interferometer Space Experiment (SunRISE), is an array of six CubeSats operating as one very large radio telescope. NASA has awarded \$62.6 million to design, build and launch SunRISE by no earlier than July 1, 2023.

02

NASA chose SunRISE in August 2017 as one of two Mission of Opportunity proposals to conduct an 11-month mission concept study. In February 2019, the agency approved a continued formulation study of the mission for an additional year.

03

SunRISE is led by Justin Kasper at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and managed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California.

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Schoolnet India Limited and Dentsu Aegis Network collaborate to expand K-12 digital solutions in Government Schools



1 Schoolnet India Limited (Schoolnet), a leading Education Technology Service provider signed an MoU with 'InDeed' a business division of Dentsu Aegis Network Communications India Pvt. Ltd., to set up innovative digital classroom solutions in 150 Government schools spread across more than 20 districts across Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan & Uttarakhand.

2 Vodafone Idea Ltd. is funding this ambitious project under its Corporate Social Responsibility initiative.

3 'K-Class' (where "K" stands for Knowledge), the innovative digital classroom solution being set up, is a combination of K-Yan® (a patented six-in-one integrated teaching-learning device) and multimedia content.

Schoolnet, along with its subsidiaries, focuses on the global "demographic dividend" opportunity, with its 3Es agenda (Education, Employability and Employment) through 3 key offerings:

- Edtech solutions to K-12 schools for improved teaching-learning-assessment outcomes
- Technical & Vocational Education & Training (TVET) services for enhancing employability and job-linkages.
- English language education and skills to enable a global-ready workforce.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

VeneSat-1 satellite inactive since March 13, to be pushed into graveyard orbits

01

The first state-owned communication satellite of Venezuela is reportedly out of service since March 13 when a series of maneuvers left it tumbling in an unusable orbit.

02

According to Space News, Venezuela's satellite, VeneSat-1 satellite has been stuck for 11 days in an elliptical orbit above the geostationary arc. This has been observed two US companies that track satellites.

03

VeneSat-1 satellite was built by Venezuelan space agency ABAE in association with China Great Wall Industry Corp., and launched in late 2008.

04

The launch of VeneSat-1 satellite was intended to provide television and broadband services to Venezuela.

05

The website further reported that both Venezuela and China planned in January this year to develop a replacement satellite titled VeneSat-2 which would continue service after VeneSat-1 retired. The first one was expected to remain in service till atleast 2024.

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DAY 79

SOCIAL SCHEMES

- Duke Starts Innovative Decontamination of N95 Masks to Help Relieve Shortages
- Fight Corona IDEathon
- Govt Launches "Aarogya Setu" mobile app
- Online literature festival 2020 organized by VaniPrakashan
- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19

Duke Starts Innovative Decontamination of N95 Masks to Help Relieve Shortages

01

Facing a critical shortage of N95 face masks that block the coronavirus, Duke Health research and clinical teams have confirmed a way to use existing vaporized hydrogen peroxide methods to decontaminate the masks so they can be reused.

02

The process uses specialized equipment to vaporize hydrogen peroxide, which permeates the layers of the mask to kill germs, including viruses, without degrading the mask material.

03

The use of hydrogen peroxide to decontaminate N95 masks was tested and published by others in 2016, but did not result in widespread adaptation.

04

The earlier studies did not include fit testing after cleaning, basically sizing the masks for individual wearers to prove efficacy in the real world, which Duke has now done.

05

The decontamination process requires specialized equipment that vaporizes the hydrogen peroxide, and a closed facility where the masks can be exposed to the vapor. No toxic byproducts result, because hydrogen peroxide breaks down to water.

Fight Corona IDEathon

1
Fight Corona IDEathon, a 2-day online ideathon, is an initiative jointly organised by MHRD Innovation Cell, AICTE, MEITY Startup Hub, InnovatioCuris and other institutions of global and national prominence offering support in terms of Technology, Knowledge, Outreach, etc., with Forge Accelerator as the Partner incubator.

2
It endeavors to scout for accessible and affordable technological solutions that can contain the rapid spread of infection, ease the mounting pressure and ensure a quick return to normalcy.

3
Challenges and problem statements have been sought from healthcare professionals, government officials and other stakeholders working on the ground and are curated under 8 different categories.

4
Few international agencies like worldstartup.co, United Nations Technology and Innovation lab, and Crowdera have also come forward to support the participants.



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SOCIAL SCHEME

Govt Launches "Arogya Setu" Mobile App


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Online literature festival 2020 organized by VaniPrakashan



- 01**
 To support its readers, VaniPrakashan Group presents literary activities in the online space for books lovers. There will be live talks of authors and interesting books every day for coming 2 weeks to listen top Hindi authors.
- 02**
 The purpose of Vani Online Sahitya Festival is to firmly maintain the bridge between readers and writers, so that the exchange of feelings, expressions and thoughts will continue.
- 03**
 In this festival, daily new writers of VaniPrakashan will be presented online through the handle of social media with their books and their ideas. Literature lovers can listen to the following writers, poets in the online literature festival.

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SOCIAL SCHEME

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package

Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19

PRADHAN MANTRI
GARIB KALYAN PACKAGE

PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana

Farmers, Women Jan Dhan Account Holders, MGNREGA workers, Women SHGs, Old Age / Widow / Disabled pensioners, private employees to benefit

**01**

As per the announcement made under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package, the launch of 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19' has been approved with the following conditions:

- ◉ It will provide an insurance cover of Rs. 50 lakh for ninety (90) days to a total of around 22.12 lakh public healthcare providers, including community health workers, who may have to be in direct contact and care of COVID-19 patients and who may be at risk of being impacted by this.
- ◉ It will also include accidental loss of life on account of contracting COVID-19.

02

These cases will also be covered subject to numbers indicated by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

03

The insurance provided under this scheme would be over and above any other insurance cover being availed of by the beneficiary.

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DAY 80

MISCELLANEOUS

- DRDO developing body suits for medical staff, five layer N99 masks, hand sanitizer and ventilators
- Google's Tilt Brush app debuts on PlayStation VR
- Meet Aham! Your New Virtual Assistant Providing Information on COVID-19 in 7 Indian Languages
- TIFR comes out with package of engaging and illuminating communication materials
- UNICEF supplies arrive in Italy to support COVID-19 response

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MISCELLANEOUS

DRDO Developing Body Suits for Medical Staff, Five Layer N99 Masks, Hand Sanitizer and Ventilators


1

Defence Research Development Organization (DRDO) is ready with four different items including hand sanitizer and Ventilators to be deployed in 'War against Corona'.

2

Ministry of Defence has said that Hand sanitizer being the basic instrument against spread of COVID-19 has now been developed in-house at DRDO and is being distributed to major offices and establishments.

3

Defence Bio-Engineering and Electro Medical Laboratory, Bangalore, a DRDO lab, has identified a vendor to produce critical care ventilator. This innovation is expected to be available within a week. Around 5,000 ventilators will be produced in the first month and 10,000 subsequently.

4

Five layer N99 masks with two layers of nano mesh developed by DRDO are very advanced

5

Earlier, DRDO had developed this body suit for medical and paramedical staff to manage and evacuate the casualties in the event of radiological emergencies, which right now is converted as a full body suit to stop contamination.

Google's Tilt Brush App debuts on PlayStation VR

Google's Tilt Brush virtual painting app made its debut on Sony's PlayStation VR.

01

Google partnered with Outerloop Games to bring the full Tilt Brush experience to PlayStation by turning the game controllers into virtual paintbrushes.

02

As the official PlayStation blog notes, the tool will allow one to make sketches and upload them to Poly, the online viewing platform.

03



Tilt Brush

by Google

Tilt Brush, Google LLC © 2020. Published by Sony Interactive Entertainment.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Meet Aham! Your New Virtual Assistant Providing Information on COVID-19 in 7 Indian Languages

The virtual assistant Aham! is created by DheeYantra, the pioneers in Indian Languages NLP and conversational AI.

This product is employed by Banks and Insurance companies across India to automate client on-boardings and customer support through conversational AI, in multiple languages.

To combat the rise of fake news related to COVID-19 contagion across India and the world, one can now visit Aham.ai.



In reply to your questions, Aham will provide you with factual information curated from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHFW). Currently you can converse with Aham on www.aham.ai and on facebook messenger.

This edition of Aham, quite responsive to the situation, will interact with the public in Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi and Tamil, in addition to English.

DheeYantra is adding more Indian languages meanwhile to cater to vernacular speakers from other states too.

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TIFR comes out with package of Engaging and Illuminating Communication Materials

1

To dispel the myths and provide a basic scientific understanding of the public health measures behind the pandemic COVID-19, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) has come out with a package of engaging and illuminating communication materials.

3

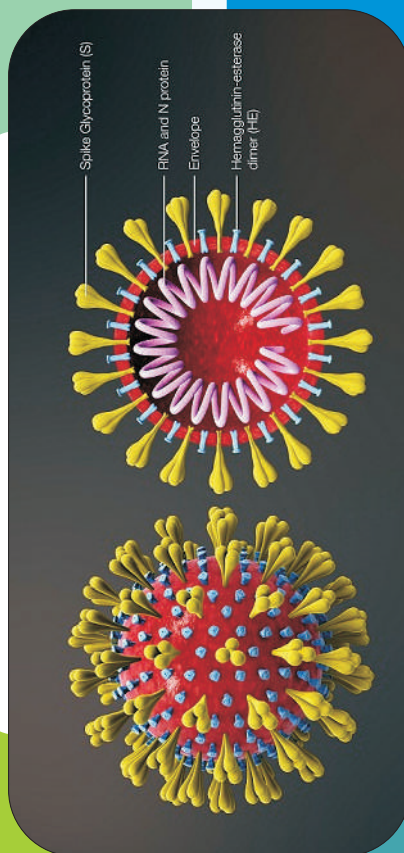
The resources are based on the original simulations published by Harry Stevens in the Washington Post.

2

Researchers have created a set of multi-lingual resources (youtube videos) in explaining why social distancing is helpful for tackling viral outbreaks like COVID-19.

4

Prof Arnab Bhattacharya, Scientist, TIFR said, they have launched it in nine languages English, Hindi, Bengali, Konkani, Marathi, Malayalam, Odia, Tamil and Telugu through volunteering efforts by faculties, families and students.



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MISCELLANEOUS

UNICEF supplies arrive in Italy to support COVID-19 Response



for every child

1

A first shipment of supplies arrived in Italy today including surgical masks, surgical and test gloves, protective suits and goggles, masks, gowns and thermometers co-ordinated by UNICEF Italy to support health workers on the frontline of Italy's fight against COVID-19.

2

The supplies have been delivered to the Civil Protection, which will make them available to health centers in the areas where there is a greater need.

3

UNICEF is working in countries around the world, including in Italy, to help children and families affected by the pandemic.

4

Since the start of the outbreak, UNICEF has shipped more than 4.27 million gloves, 573,300 surgical masks, 98,931 N95 respirators, 156,557 gowns and 12,750 goggles in support of countries as they respond to the pandemic.

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DAY 81

ENVIRONMENT

- Grey Hypocolius spotted in Rajasthan for the first time
- Orange-bellied 'starry dwarf frog
- Orcas (Killer Whale)
- Velvet Worm
- Zoonoses

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ENVIRONMENT

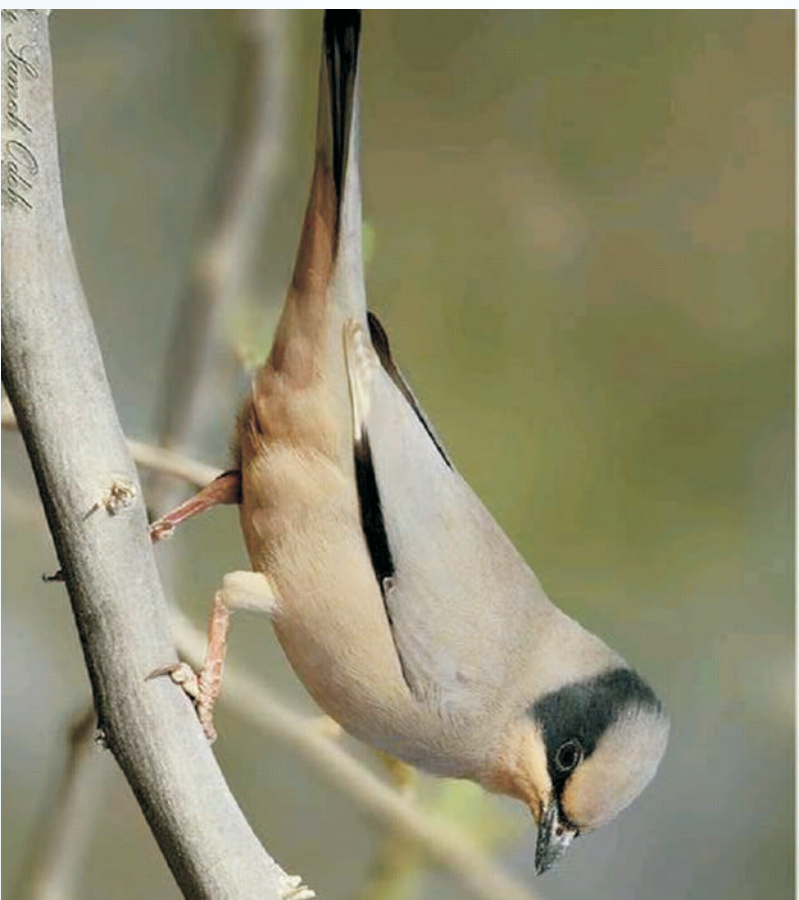
Grey Hypocolius spotted in Rajasthan for the First Time

1 The Grey Hypocolius is a small migratory bird that usually makes its home in West Asia and North Africa and is a regular visitor to Kutch, has been sighted in Western Rajasthan for the first time.

2 The grey hypocolius is a small passerine bird species this slender and long tailed bird is found in the dry semi-desert region of northern Africa, Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western India.

3 They fly in flocks and forage mainly on fruits, migrating south in winter.

4 The conservation status by IUCN is "Least Concern".



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ENVIRONMENT

ORANGE-BELLIED 'STARRY DWARF FROG'



Starry dwarf frog is a thumbnail-sized species was recently discovered in India's Western Ghats, one of the world's "hottest" biodiversity

01

Scientists have named the frog *Astrobatrachus kurichiyanana* for its constellation-like markings and the indigenous people of Kurichiymala, the hill range where it was found.

02

Dark brown with a bright orange underbelly and speckled with pale blue dots, the frog camouflages well in wet leaf litter.

03

Orcas (Killer Whale)



- 01 An orca is a marine mammal.
- 02 They are often confused for being a whale because of their name 'killer whale', but orcas are actually dolphins.
- 03 In fact, they are the largest member of the dolphin family.
- 04 Orcas were given the name 'killer whale' by ancient sailors' observations of groups of orcas hunting and preying on larger whale species.
- 05 Orcas are incredibly popular as they are the most widely distributed of all whales and dolphins, found in every single ocean.
- 06 Orcas are incredibly popular as they are the most widely distributed of all whales and dolphins, found in every single ocean.

Velvet Worm



Velvet worm, (phylum Onychophora), any of about 70 wormlike species of ancient, terrestrial invertebrates with short, thick legs and a dry, velveteen body.

They inhabit the rainforest since the age of Dinosaurs.

Onychophorans range in size from 14 to 150 mm (about 0.6 to 6 inches) and are found in rainforests. Unable to control water loss, they cannot tolerate dry habitats.

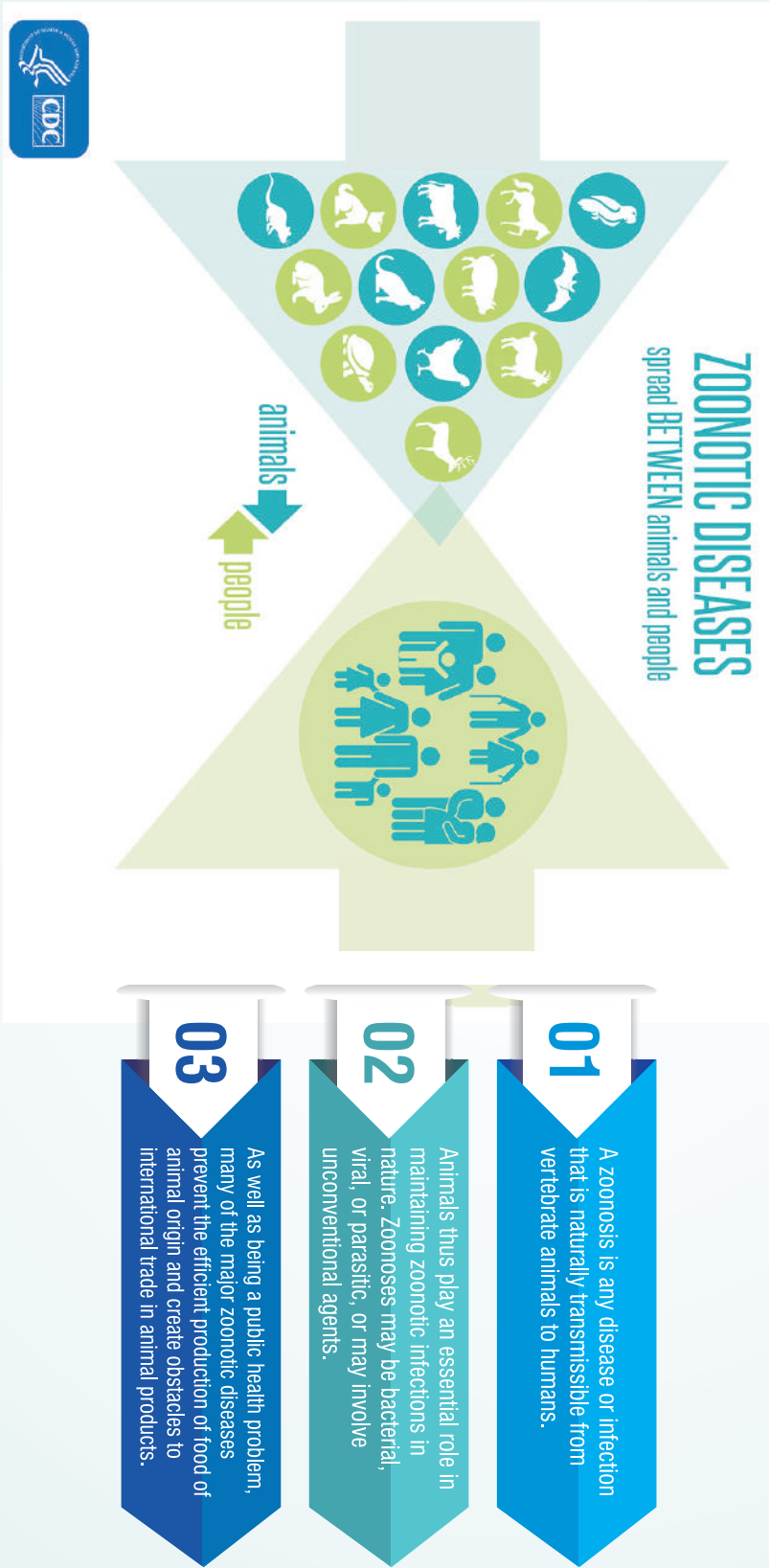
The velvet worm is predatory; it spits quick-hardening slime from projections (oral papillae) near the mouth to subdue invertebrates such as crickets, spiders, and wood lice.

It then uses its jaws to open the captured prey before injecting digestive saliva and sucking out the liquefied insides.

The slime used for capture is made of protein, and the velvet worm consumes it while the victim's insides dissolve.

The velvet worm will also squirt slime in self-defense.

ZOONOSSES



DAY 82

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- COVID-19 emergency package for states, UTs
- FATF to review Pak's performance on global commitments to fight terror in June in China
- Kerala govt sets up COVID-19 helpdesks for non-resident Malayalis
- UGC directs Universities to set up mental health helplines to address psychosocial concerns of students
- UNGA adopts resolution calling for global solidarity in fight against COVID-19

COVID-19 Emergency Package for States, UTs



01

The 100 per cent centrally funded project will be implemented in three phases from January 2020 to March 2024.

02

The three phases of the project are Phase - 1 from January 2020 to June 2020, the second phase is from July 2020 to March 2021 and the third phase from April 2021 to March 2024.

03

The objective is to have emergency COVID-19 response, strengthening national and state health systems to support prevention and preparedness procurement of essential medical equipment, consumables and drugs, strengthening of surveillance activities including setting up of laboratories and bio-security preparedness.

FATF to review Pak's performance on Global Commitments to fight terror in June in China



01

Global anti-money laundering watchdog FATF will review Pakistan's performance to meet international commitments in the fight against terror financing during a meeting scheduled to be held in China in June.

02

Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

03

Currently placed on the FATF's 'grey list', Pakistan has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations.

04

In February, the FATF gave Pakistan a four-month grace period to complete its 27-point action plan against money laundering and terror financing committed with the international community when it noted that Pakistan had delivered on 14 points and missed 13 other targets.

05

FATF strongly urged Pakistan to swiftly complete its full action plan by June 2020 or else it would be moved to the list of monitored jurisdictions, commonly known as a blacklist.

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Kerala Government sets up COVID-19 helpdesks for non-resident Malayalis

**1**

The Kerala government has set up five COVID-19 helpdesks for non-resident Keralites in countries which have a substantial number of Pravasi Malayalis.

2

The helpdesks started by Norka Roots will be managed locally by persons and voluntary organisations active among non-resident Keralites.

3

The Chief Minister also informed that online medical services would be made available to the non-resident Keralites through the Norka Roots website.

4

Pravasi Malayalis can consult prominent doctors in Kerala by audio or video calls through the website, with prior registration.

5

Currently, registration for the Norka Pravasi ID card is only available for the Malayali expatriates residing or working abroad for a period of not less than six months. Now students from Kerala studying abroad can also avail this facility.

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

UGC directs Universities to set up mental Health Helplines to address Psychosocial Concerns of Students


01

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has directed all universities and colleges to set up mental health helplines to address psychosocial concerns of students during the lockdown imposed to combat Corona virus.

02

UGC Secretary in a letter to Vice Chancellors wrote, it is equally important to address any kind of mental health and psychosocial concerns of student community during and after COVID-19 situation issue.

03

In order to reassure the student community and to avoid any kind of stress or panic in the prevailing situation vis-à-vis their studies, health and other issues, the universities and colleges may set up mental health helplines for the purpose.

04

The helpline should be regularly monitored and managed by counsellors and identified faculty members.

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

UNGA adopts resolution calling for Global Solidarity in fight against COVID-19

1

The United Nations General Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution on COVID-19, calling for intensified international cooperation to defeat the pandemic.

2

Co-sponsored by 188 nations including India, the resolution titled Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is first such document on the global pandemic to be adopted by the world organization.


3

The resolution called for intensified international cooperation in exchanging information, scientific knowledge and best practices recommended by the World Health Organization.

4

The UN Security Council is yet to discuss the Corona virus outbreak, even as the total number of coronavirus cases across the world crossed one million.

DAY 83

ECONOMY

- Bengaluru voted best city for IT professionals
- Fugitive Economic Offender's Act, 2018
- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) Samvaad
- Italy unveils record 430 bn US dollars stimulus to boost economy
- National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) available round the clock

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ECONOMY

Bengaluru voted best city for IT Professionals

01 Even as there are traffic snarls, most IT professionals consider Bengaluru as the best city to work for as the city offers high living standards, highest appraisal and career growth opportunities, according to a survey.

02 Over 40 per cent of information technology (IT) professionals voted Bengaluru as the top city to work, according to TechGig's survey.

03 Hyderabad and Pune secured the second and third spots, respectively, with 13 per cent and 11 per cent votes. Delhi-NCR (20 per cent) secured the least votes among the preferred city chart.

04 The survey was conducted online at the beginning of April among over 1,830 IT professionals in the 25-35 years age group having at least two years of experience.

05 Further, the survey has showed that 58 per cent of IT professionals prefer Bengaluru as the city provides high living standards.

06 The survey also revealed that over 57 per cent of IT professionals are already working in the city of their choice.



Fugitive Economic Offender's Act, 2018


01

The Bill allows for a person to be declared as a fugitive economic offender (FEO) if:

- an arrest warrant has been issued against him for any specified offences where the value involved is over Rs 100 crore, and
- he has left the country and refuses to return to face prosecution.

02

To declare a person an FEO, an application will be filed in a Special Court (designated under the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002) containing details of the properties to be confiscated, and any information about the person's whereabouts.

03

The use of hydrogen peroxide to decontaminate N95 masks was tested and published by others in 2016, but did not result in widespread adaptation.

04

Upon declaration as an FEO, properties of a person may be confiscated and vested in the central government, free of encumbrances (rights and claims in the property).

05

Further, the FEO or any company associated with him may be barred from filing or defending civil claims.

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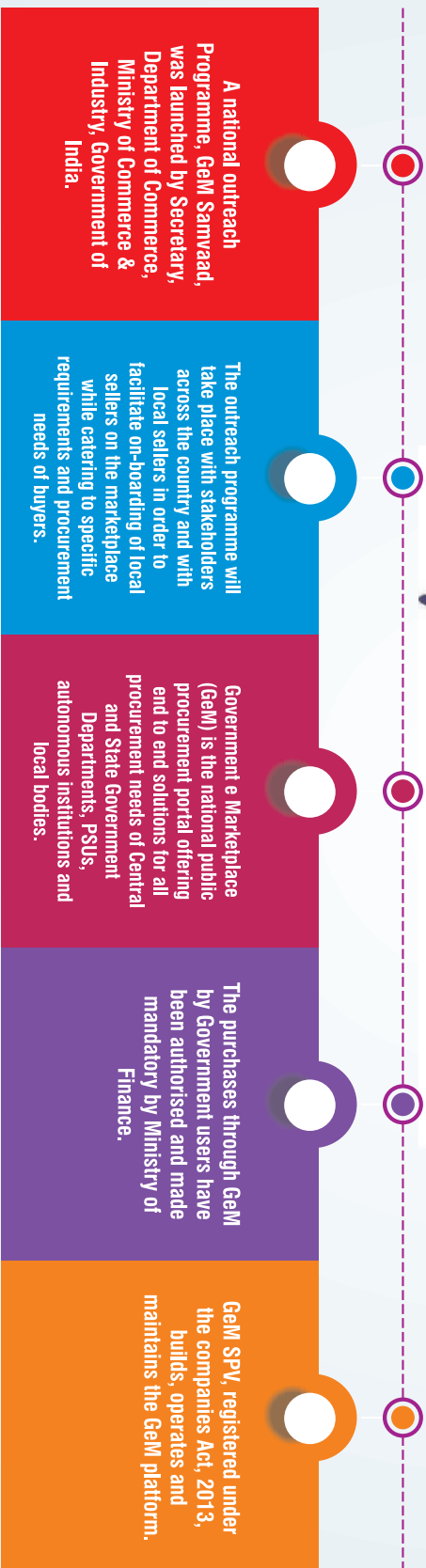
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ECONOMY

Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

Samvaad


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Italy unveils record 430bn US dollars stimulus to boost Economy

Italy has unveiled a record 430 billion US Dollar stimulus to help businesses hurt by a month-long national lockdown that is like to run on for many more weeks.

The programme will add to the 340 billion euros in government-backed loans announced last month.

Half of the new package will be earmarked for export-oriented companies whose turnover has imploded over the past month.

The government also announced that it will take steps to protect Italian companies weakened by the economic crisis from being taken over by foreign competitors.

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ECONOMY

National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) available round the clock

**01**

National electronic funds transfer (NEFT), a retail payment system operated by the RBI, became a 24x7 facility on 16 December. The facility will be available on all days of the year, including bank holidays.

02

Before 16 December, NEFT was available for customers from 8am to 7pm on all working days, except the second and fourth Saturdays of the month and other bank holidays.

03

This is the second of two major changes implemented by RBI in the context of NEFT. In its July monetary policy review, the regulator decided to do away with processing charges levied by it for NEFT and real-time gross settlement (RTGS).

04

Under RTGS, the minimum transfer amount is ₹2 lakh and the facility is available only during working hours of banks.

05

IMPS is a real-time payment service available even on holidays with an upper limit on transactions of ₹2 lakh, but no lower limit.

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DAY 84

ENVIRONMENT

- **IMD predicts normal monsoon for 2020**
- **No ice makes it a tough winter for seal pups in Baltic Sea**
- **Peak Hour Pollution flattened due to COVID-19**
- **Study of Community Forest Resources by Ministry of Tribal Affairs**
- **Surge in illegal wildlife trading amid nationwide lockdown**

GS SCORE

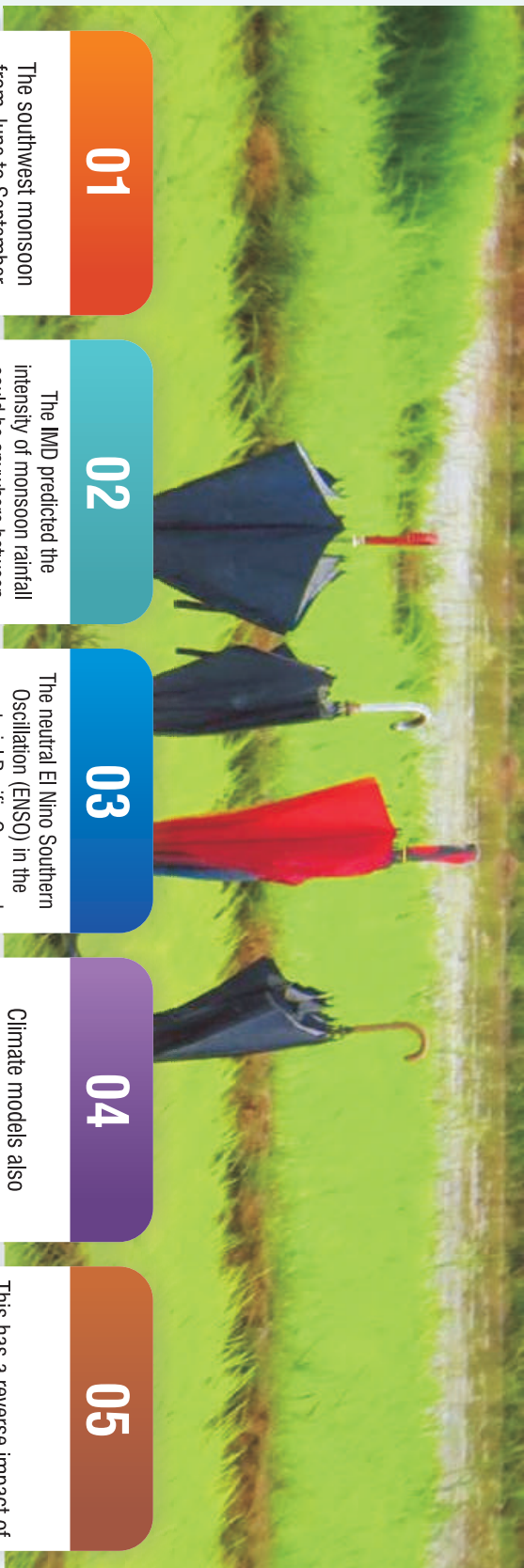
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ENVIRONMENT

ORAI IMD predicts 'Near Normal Monsoon for 2020'

**01**

The southwest monsoon from June to September over India may be normal, according to a long-range forecast issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on April 15, 2020.

02

The IMD predicted the intensity of monsoon rainfall could be anywhere between 96 and 104 per cent of the long period average (LPA). The LPA of the monsoon season rainfall over the country as a whole for 1961-2010 was 880 mm.

03

The neutral El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions prevailed, with climate models suggesting that they would be the same for the entire monsoon, according to the IMD forecast.

04

Climate models also predicted the occurrence of a weak La Nina condition, defined by a cooling of sea waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

05

This has a reverse impact of the El Nino phenomenon and leads to a basic cooling effect on worldwide climatic conditions.

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NO ICE WINTER No Ice makes it a tough Winter for Seal Pups in Baltic Sea


01

Hundreds of grey seal pups are dying on the shores of the Baltic Sea in Estonia and Latvia as the Nordic coastline faced the first winter without ice in decades, researchers said.

02

Grey seals need ice - which helps them keep a distance from predators like wolves or foxes - in order to breed pups during the winter.

03

Some of the larger islands were so over-populated that the estimated mortality rate among seal pups there would be at least 50 percent. That high rate was in part because pups lose their mothers more easily and so don't get enough food.

04

This spring the problem is compounded by the coronavirus, which is keeping researchers away from the seals, as Estonia has halted travel between the mainland and its islands.

05

The Estonian Weather Service said the average air temperature over winter was 2.5 degrees Celsius (36.5 Fahrenheit) rather than the historical average of -3.3 Celsius (26.5 Fahrenheit) - the warmest since 1961.

06

Latvia's Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre said it was the warmest winter since records began in 1924.

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ENVIRONMENT

OF Peak Hour Pollution ‘ST flattened due to COVID-19’

**01**

As vehicles go off the road after the country-wide lockdown in the wake of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, the typical two humps of daily pollution coinciding with morning and evening traffic peak-hours have nearly flattened out in India's big cities.

02

A similar trend is evident in other big cities including Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai. But the impact of this overall declining trend is dramatic on daily peak-hour pollution.

03

This is evident from the new analysis carried out by the Centre for Science and Environment that has assessed hourly trend in PM_{2.5} and NO₂ levels during the day before and after the lockdown and also on the day of the Janata curfew.

04

While overall daily levels of PM_{2.5} and NO₂ concentrations have fallen significantly by up to 60 per cent in several cities during the lockdown days, the hourly change is also dramatic. Hourly NO₂ levels that are strongly associated with vehicles, have dropped more sharply.

05

Similarly, peak hour NO₂ concentration has dropped sharply by 64 per cent in Delhi, 66 per cent in Gurugram, 40 per cent in Faridabad, 79 per cent in Noida, and 75 per cent in Ghaziabad.

Study of Community Forest Resources by Ministry of Tribal Affairs


01

State-level guidelines must be created for sustainable resource usage in areas where community forest resource (CFR) rights are given under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), the Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) noted in a study.

02

The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) in February 2019.

03

Under FRA, a village can get its traditionally held forest land, legally recognised as CFR.

04

The FRA gives gram sabhas "right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use."

05

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India empowered the third tier of democratic government (gram panchayats/ gram sabhas) for local self-governance. FRA and the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 further empowered gram sabhas.

Surge in Illegal Wildlife Trading amid Nationwide Lockdown

Illegal wildlife trade seems to be on the rise amid the nationwide lockdown to curb the novel coronavirus outbreak. National parks across the country reported incidents of clashes between wildlife rangers and hunters.

1

Exotic birds were captured and wild animals hunted as monitoring decreased and administrative officers were kept busy with running emergency services. Hunting festivals also saw an increase in participation.

2



3

The Sandra festival, a hunting festival in the forests of Panskura and Kolaghat, in West Bengal's East Midnapore district, saw the participation of tribal communities in West Bengal's East Midnapore district.

4

West Bengal has a large exotic bird breeding industry that supports a huge number of people. Parakeets and mynas are the most commonly traded birds in West Bengal, while the peacock is hunted in Maharashtra.

DAY 85

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- ICMR creates new strategy for Covid-19 testing in India
- NIPER-Guwahati designs innovative 3D products to fight COVID-19
- N.Korea test fires multiple short-range anti-ship missiles
- Space station crew to blast off despite virus-hit build up
- US approves sale of anti-ship missiles, torpedoes to India

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ICMR creates new strategy for Covid-19 testing in India



01

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has devised a new strategy for Covid-19 testing in India and in hotspots or cluster and in large migration gatherings or evacuees centres.

02

The new strategy for Covid-19 testing in India include all symptomatic individuals who have undertaken international travel in the last 14 days and all symptomatic contacts of laboratory confirmed cases.

03

It also include all symptomatic health care workers and all patients with severe acute respiratory illness like fever, cough and shortness of breath.

04

Asymptomatic direct and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case should be tested once between day five and day 14 of coming in his or her contact.

05

In hotspots or cluster defined by Health and Family Welfare Ministry and in large migration gatherings or evacuees centres, all symptomatic having fever, cough, sore throat and runny nose will real-time polymerase chain reaction, rRT-PCR within seven days of illness.

06

After seven days of illness antibody test will be done if rRT-PCR confirms it negative.

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N.Korea test fires multiple Short-range Anti-Ship Missiles

1

North Korea launched multiple short-range anti-ship cruise missiles into the sea and Sukhoi jets fired air-to-surface missiles as part of its ongoing military exercises.

2

The missile tests came on the eve of a national holiday in North Korea to celebrate the birthday of Kim Il Sung, the founder of the country and grandfather of the current leader, Kim Jong Un.

3

The anti-ship missiles plunged into the sea more than 150 kilometres (93 miles) off the east coast town of Munchon, while the Sukhoi carried out firing tests.

4

The latest tests were part of wintertime drills the North has been carrying out in recent weeks after coronavirus concerns caused delays.

5

North Korea has been conducting weeks of military drills, including several launches of short-range ballistic missiles. Last month, it fired nine ballistic missiles in four rounds of tests, according to analysts.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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



Researchers at the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Guwahati (NIPER-G) have come out with two products that promise to be of great help in the fight against the current pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 infection in the world.

The first product is a 3D-printed hands-free object that could be used to help open or close doors, windows, drawers (both vertical and horizontal), and refrigerator handle, or press elevator buttons, and laptop/desktop keyboards, including turning the switch buttons on/off.

The second product is a 3D-printed antimicrobial face-shield to control the spread of novel coronavirus.

It was designed after a thorough study to understand how viruses spread through oral, ophthalmic, olfactory and other body cavities.

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Space station crew to blast off despite virus-hit build up



A three-man crew is set to travel to the International Space Station, leaving behind a planet overwhelmed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Russia's Roscosmos space agency and NASA's Chris Cassidy will blast off from Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, where COVID-

Astronauts routinely go into quarantine ahead of space missions and give a final press conference at Baikonur from behind a glass wall to protect them from infection.

The ISS typically carries up to six people at a time and has a livable space of 388 cubic metres (13,700 cubic feet) -- larger than a six-bedroom house according to NASA.

The International Space Station is a rare example of cooperation between Russia and the West. It has been orbiting Earth at about 28,000 kilometres per hour (17,000 miles per hour) since 1998.

US approves sale of Anti-Ship Missiles, Torpedoes to India



1 The Trump administration has notified the Congress of its determination to sell Harpoon air-launched anti-ship missiles and Mark 54 lightweight torpedoes worth 155 US million dollars to India to enhance its deterrent capabilities against "regional threats" and to bolster its homeland defence.

2 The US recognised India as a "Major Defence Partner" in 2016. This designation allows India to buy more advanced and sensitive technologies from America at a par with that of the US' closest allies and partners.

3 The Harpoon missile system will be integrated into the P-8I anti-submarine warfare aircraft to conduct anti-surface warfare missions in defence of critical sea lanes while enhancing inter-operability with the United States and other allied forces.

4 The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet current and future threats from enemy weapon systems. The MK 54 Lightweight Torpedo will provide the capability to conduct anti-submarine warfare missions.

DAY 86

MISCELLANEOUS

- CRPF Valour Day
- Revised Version of Swachhata Application launched to fight COVID-19
- Top oil producers agree on deal to cut output amid coronavirus crisis
- Union HRD Minister launches a web-portal YUKTI
- Visakhapatnam airfield remains open during lockdown

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MISCELLANEOUS

CRPF Valour Day

1

President led the nation in saluting Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on its Valour Day on April 9.

2

On April 9th, 1965 a small contingent of 2nd Bn CRPF successfully fought and repulsed an attack by a Pakistani Brigade on Sardar Post in the Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, eliminating 34 Pakistani soldiers and capturing 4 alive.

CRPF VALOUR DAY

3

Never in the history of military battles have a handful of policemen fought back a full fledged Infantry Brigade in such a manner.

4

In this conflict, six valiant CRPF men also attained martyrdom. As a tribute to the saga of the brave men of the Force, 9th April is befittingly celebrated as "Valour Day" in the Force.

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Revised Version of Swachhata App launched to Fight COVID-19



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MISCELLANEOUS

Top Oil Producers agree on deal to cut output amid Coronavirus Crisis

1

Top oil-producing countries have agreed to cut output in order to boost plummeting oil prices due to the coronavirus crisis and a Russia-Saudi price war.

2

Kuwait Oil Minister announced the agreement to cut production by nearly 10 million barrel per day by OPEC members starting on May 1st.


3

OPEC producers, dominated by Saudi Arabia, and allies led by Russia, met via video-conference in a last-ditch effort to cement an accord struck early Friday that hinged on Mexico's

4

Yesterday's meeting was chaired by Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak.

Union HRD Minister launches a Web-Portal YUKTI



01 Union Minister for HRD has launched a web-portal YUKTI (Young India Combating COVID with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) in New Delhi.

02 It's a unique portal and dashboard to monitor and record the efforts and initiatives of MHRD. The portal intends to cover the different dimensions of COVID-19 challenges in a very holistic and comprehensive way.

03 It will cover the various initiatives and efforts of the institutions in academics, research especially related to COVID, social initiatives by institutions and the measures taken for the betterment of the total wellbeing of the students.

04 The portal will cover both qualitative and quantitative parameters for effective delivery of services to the academic community at large.

05 The portal will also allow various institutions to share their strategies for various challenges which are there because of the unprecedented situation of COVID-19 and other future initiatives.

06 It is hoped that this portal will give inputs for better planning and will enable MHRD to monitor effectively its activities for coming six months.

07 The portal will also establish a two-way communication channel between the Ministry of HRD and the institutions so that the Ministry can provide the necessary support system to the institutions

Visakhapatnam Airfield remains open during Lockdown



1 With the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, INS Dega of Eastern Naval Command (ENC) ensured that the joint-user airfield at Visakhapatnam remains open round the clock..

2 The manning of the airfield has been modified to ensure that all required safety services and airfield facilities continued to be available.

3 This ensured that all special flights, as well as, the cargo flight of SpiceJet continued its operations unhindered. So far, 15 sorties of the cargo flight have operated since the lockdown has been enforced.

4 Further, the Indian Navy continued to maintain its operational vigil carrying out regular Maritime Surveillance missions by day and night.

5 The Dornier squadron of the ENC, INAS 311, operating from the air station, has been undertaking regular maritime surveillance missions.

DAY 87

MISCELLANEOUS

- Abu Dhabi to offer free COVID-19 tests to workers in Mussafah
- Facebook launches third party fact checking in Bangladesh
- MNRE urges states to set up renewable energy equipment parks
- US approves sale of anti-ship missiles, torpedoes to India
- Uttar Pradesh becomes first State in the country to start pool testing of corona virus samples

Abu Dhabi to offer free COVID-19 Tests to workers in Mussafah



01

The Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED) will set up clinics in Mussafah, to offer free COVID-19 tests to workers.

02

The ADDED requested people with fever, cough and difficulty with breathing, particularly if they are above 50s, to seek medical attention at the specialist clinics for free examination and treatment.

03

Mussafah is one of the industrial areas south west of Abu Dhabi. The move comes in line with the Abu Dhabi Government's efforts and precautionary measures to ensure health and safety of the workers and to contain the spread of the virus.

Facebook Launches Third Party Fact Checking in Bangladesh



- 1 Facebook announced the launch of its third party fact checking system in Bangladesh to discourage the spread of fake news in the country. Facebook in partnership with Boom Fact check will review and rate the stories, including photos and videos.
- 2 It will debunk misinformation on topics from health and medicine to current affairs so that Facebook users in Bangladesh are able to identify factual information and news online.
- 3 When third party fact-checkers rate a post as false or fake, it will appear less or at the bottom of news feed. This will reduce the spread of the post.
- 4 Boom is an Indian fact checking website which is available in English, Hindi and Bengali.
- 5 Facebook started its fact-checking programme in 2016 and now it covers 60 partners in 50 languages.

MNRE urges states to set up renewable energy equipment parks



Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has initiated action towards setting up new hubs for manufacturing renewable energy equipments to meet both domestic and global demand.

Ministry has written to various state governments and various port authorities to identify land parcels of 50 to 500 acres for setting up such Parks.

Tuticorin Port Trust, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have already expressed their interest in setting up Renewable Energy Manufacturing Parks.

At a time when many companies are shifting their manufacturing firms from China, it is time for India to bring policy changes for facilitating manufacturing in India.

In tune with this, the Ministry has already set up Renewable Energy Industry Facilitation and Promotion Board to facilitate investment in the sector.

US approves sale of anti-ship missiles, torpedoes to India

1

The Trump administration has notified the Congress of its determination to sell Harpoon air-launched anti-ship missiles and Mark 54 lightweight torpedoes worth 155 US million dollars to India to enhance its deterrent capabilities against "regional threats" and to bolster its homeland defence.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Uttar Pradesh becomes first State in the country to start pool testing of corona virus samples

Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in the country to start pool testing of corona virus samples.

01

The move is aimed at speeding up the screening process and also bring down the cost of testing samples.

02

State health department has also decided to carryout the audit of any death in state due to COVID-19.

03**06**

However, if the result of one collection is found positive, then each of those samples is tested individually.

05

If the result of a collection of samples comes negative, then that means all the samples in that group are negative.

04

This facility is being expanded in all districts and initially 5 samples will be pooled. In the pool testing method, multiple swab samples are pooled together and tested.

DAY 88

ENVIRONMENT

- COP26 climate summit postponed due to COVID-19
- Deserted Thai beaches lure rare turtles to build most nests in 20 years
- Environment Ministry's Draft EIA Notification
- No ice makes it a tough winter for seal pups in Baltic Sea
- Study of Community Forest Resources by Ministry of Tribal Affairs

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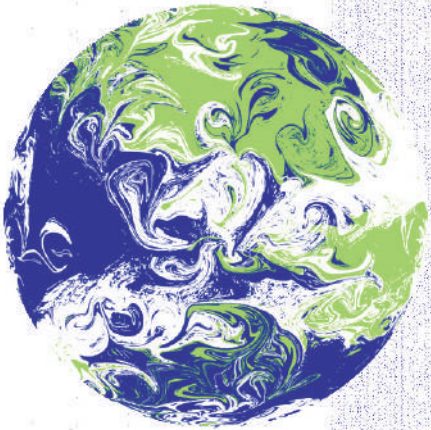
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ENVIRONMENT

COP26 Climate Summit Postponed due to COVID-19



UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2020

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

01

The biggest climate summit in five years, the Conference of Parties 26 (COP 26), which was scheduled to be held in November in Glasgow, has been postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

02

The rescheduled meet will be held next year in the same city; the dates will be finalised later.

03

It is reported that the Scottish government plans to convert the venue for the conference, the SEC arena, into a field hospital. The UK is one of the more severely affected countries by COVID-19 and is running short of supplies and beds.

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ENVIRONMENT

Deserted Thai beaches lure rare turtles to build most nests in 20 years


01

Thailand has found the largest number of nests of rare leatherback sea turtles in two decades on beaches bereft of tourists because of the coronavirus pandemic.

02

Leatherbacks are the world's largest sea turtles.

03

They are considered endangered in Thailand and listed as a vulnerable species globally by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

04

They lay their eggs in dark and quiet areas, scarce when tourists thronged the beaches.

05

People have also been known to dig into their nests and steal eggs

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ENVIRONMENT

Environment Ministry's Draft EIA Notification

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has proposed a draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification to replace the current notification, which goes back to 2006.

The concept of EIA came to India in 1978-1979 but became mandatory only in 1994 after the government notified it as a requirement under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

The new notification is being brought in order to make the process more transparent and expedient by implementation of an online system, further delegation, rationalisation and standardisation of the process.


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No ice makes it a tough winter for seal pups in Baltic Sea

01

According to research Hundreds of grey seal pups are dying on the shores of the Baltic Sea in Estonia and Latvia as the Nordic coastline faced the first winter without ice in decades.

02

Grey seals need ice - which helps them keep a distance from predators like wolves or foxes - in order to breed pups during the winter.

03

Without it, they have been forced onto islets they would not normally inhabit, causing overcrowding, disrupting the breeding season and reducing the survival rate of newborns.

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ENVIRONMENT

Study of Community Forest Resources by Ministry of Tribal Affairs


01

According to a study conducted by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, State-level guidelines must be created for sustainable resource usage in areas where community forest resource (CFR) rights are given under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), the Energy and Resource Institute (TERI).

02

MoTA must issue broad guidelines and principles for implementation of CFRs, mentioning specific role of the state forest department, state tribal/social welfare department, revenue department and gram sabhas

03

MoTa should focus on capacity-building of gram sabha members, assessment of the biomass stock and biodiversity conservation

04

Focus on capacity building programmes to educate various stakeholder government departments about the acts/schemes/policies

05

The micro-plans prepared by gram sabha for their respective CFR should be a part of the working plans of forest division concerned, so that forest staff could facilitate the implementation of sustainable forest management.

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DAY 89

ECONOMY

- CBDT refunds over 5,204 crore rupees to help MSMEs
- Fifteenth Finance Commission to assess impacts of COVID-19
- GoI amends FDI policy
- MNRE urges states to set up renewable energy equipment parks, make India global hub
- RBI announces Rs 50,000 crore for NBFCs, MFIs

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ECONOMY

CBDT refunds over 5,204 crore rupees to help MSMEs

1

The CBDT has issued income tax refunds worth Rs 5,204 crore as a relief to MSMEs.

2

These refunds would help MSMEs to carry on their business activities without pay cuts or layoffs.


3

Pursuant to the Government's April 8 decision the I-T department has issued nearly 14 lakh refunds up to Rs 5 lakh each till date, to help taxpayers.

4

It further said that keeping its focus on providing relief to small businesses in MSME sector, the CBDT will further issue refunds of Rs 7,760 crore at the earliest possible.

Fifteenth Finance Commission to assess impacts of COVID-19


01

The Economic Advisory Council of the Fifteenth Finance Commission will meet this month to discuss implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on GDP growth.

02

The members would also be discussing on the possible assumptions for tax buoyancy and revenue in the current and next financial year.

03

Discussion on public expenditure fillip to shore up the economy would also be on the agenda.

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ECONOMY

GoI amends FDI policy

01

In an attempt to curb opportunistic takeovers and acquisitions of Indian companies during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of India has reviewed the country's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy on 17 April 2020.

02

Similarly, the government has also made it clear in case of change of ownership of any FDI to any entity from a country sharing border with India, permission will have to be sought from the government.

03

This will apply to all existing and future investments, either direct or indirect.

04

China taking over several vulnerable companies across the world, during the financial crisis developed during the spread of COVID-19 has been a worry for several countries.

05

For India, the People's Bank of China increasing its stake in Housing Development Finance Corp Ltd is said to be one of the immediate triggers for this decision.

MNRE urges states to set up Renewable Energy Equipment Parks, make India global hub

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ECONOMY



01

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has urged states to set up renewable energy (RE) equipment manufacturing parks to meet domestic demand as well as make India a global production hub.

02

The MNRE has offered many incentives to states to set up such parks at a time when numerous international firms are looking to move their production base out of China after the COVID-19 outbreak.

03

With this objective, the ministry has written to various state governments and port authorities to identify land parcels of 50-500 acres for setting up such parks.

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ECONOMY

RBI announces Rs 50,000 crore for NBFCs, MFIs



1 Reserve Bank of India announced TLTRO 2.0 of Rs 50,000 crore to ensure that small and mid-sized corporates, including non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro finance institutions (MFIs) get enough liquidity.

2 The funds availed by banks under TLTRO 2.0 should be invested in investment grade bonds, commercial paper, and non-convertible debentures of NBFCs, with at least 50 per cent of the total amount availed going to small and mid-sized NBFCs and MFIs.

3 These investments have to be made within one month of the availability of liquidity from the RBI

DAY 90

ART & CULTURE

- Dekho Apna Desh
- February 21: International Mother Language Day
- ICCR launches global painting competition on coronavirus
- National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India
- Odisha cancels annual Chaitra Jatra festival

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ART & CULTURE

India's Ministry of Tourism has launched a new initiative that allows exploring the length and breadth of the country, virtually.

“Dekho Apna Desh” or “See Your Country” is a series of webinars that hosts sessions on different cities of India, highlighting their tourist attractions, history and culture.

Titled “City of Cities Delhi’s Personal Diary”, its first webinar on April 14 explored the rich history of the national capital.

The next webinar was hosted on April 16 taking visitors on a virtual journey across Kolkata.

Dekho Apna Desh



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ICCR launches Global Painting Competition on Coronavirus

1

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has decided to launch a global painting competition entitled "United against CORONA- Express through Art."



भारतीय सांस्कृतिक सम्बंध परिषद
 Indian Council For Cultural Relations

3

The event encourages submissions of artistic expressions to present their emotions, feelings, ideas and innovative thoughts on the COVID-19, social distancing, quarantine and the fight against the virus through the following media: Paintings - on Canvas/Paper - oil, water colours, pencil, crayons or Digital Art - Graphic Posters & Paintings.

2

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations with its focus on building cultural links with countries around the world and connecting people to people through Cultural and Educational exchanges, calls on Indians and citizens of the world to express these emotions through a competition

4

The best of the expressions will be exhibited in leading galleries in India and abroad.

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ART & CULTURE

February 21: International Mother Language Day

1

The idea to celebrate International Mother Language Day was the initiative of Bangladesh.

2

It was approved at the 1999 UNESCO General Conference and has been observed throughout the world since 2000.



3

UNESCO believes in the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity for sustainable societies.

4

It is within its mandate for peace that it works to preserve the differences in cultures and languages that foster tolerance and respect for others.

National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India


01

Aiming at creating awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage properties of the different states at national and international level, government launched the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India in New Delhi.

02

The National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India is an attempt to recognize the diversity of Indian culture embedded in its intangible heritage.

03

It aims to raise awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage elements from different states of India at national and international level and ensure their protection.

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ART & CULTURE

Odisha cancels Annual Chaitra Jatra Festival



The famous annual Chaitra Jatra festival scheduled to be held on March 17 at Odisha's Tara Tarini hill shrine was cancelled as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 infection.

This festival is celebrated at Tara Tarini hill shrine on Tuesdays of the Hindu month of Chaitra.

The largest gatherings occur on second and third Tuesdays. March 17 happens to be second Tuesday.

Tara Tarini hill shrine, located at Kumari hill on banks of the Rushikulya river, is a major centre of Shakti worship in Odisha.

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