

COVID-19 UPDATES**Violence Against Health Care Workers**

The Union Cabinet has approved promulgation of Ordinance to amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 in the light of COVID-19 pandemic situation making acts of violence against the healthcare workers as cognizable and non-bailable offences.

About:

- Under it, there is a provision to provide compensation for injury to healthcare service personnel or for causing damage or loss to the property.
- The investigation into the cases of attack on healthcare workers will be completed within 30 days and judgment will be pronounced within one
- Accused of the attack can attract a punishment ranging from 3 months to 5 years and a fine from 50 thousand rupees to 2 lakh rupees. In case of grievous injuries, the accused can be sentenced from 6 months to 7 years and they can also be penalized from one lakh to 5 lakh rupees.
- If damage is done to the vehicles or clinics of healthcare workers, then a compensation amounting to twice the market value of the damaged property will be taken from the accused.

India Covid-19 Emergency Response And Health System Preparedness Package

Union Cabinet gave its post facto approval for significant investments to the tune of Rs. 15,000 crore for 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package'.

About:

The funds sanctioned will be utilized in 3 Phases and for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response (an amount of Rs. 7,774 Crore) has been provisioned and rest for medium-term support (1-4 years) to be provided under mission mode approach. The key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 in India through

- the development of diagnostics and COVID-dedicated treatment facilities,
- centralized procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients,
- strengthen and build resilient National and State health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks,
- setting up of laboratories and bolster surveillance activities etc.

These interventions and initiatives would be implemented under the overall umbrella of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Zoonoses

According to experts, the coronavirus outbreak comes from the animal world. It is human activity that enabled the virus to jump to people, and specialists are warning that if nothing changes, many other pandemics of this nature will follow.

About:

- The name given to diseases transmitted from animals to humans is “zoonoses”, based on the Greek words for “animal” and “sickness”.
- They are not new — tuberculosis, rabies, toxoplasmosis, malaria, to name just a few, are all zoonoses.
- According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), 60% of human infectious diseases originate from animals. This figure climbs to 75% for “emerging” diseases such as Ebola, HIV, avian flu, Zika, or SARS, another type of coronavirus. The list goes on.
- The emergence of zoonotic diseases is often associated with environmental changes or ecological disturbances, such as agricultural intensification and human settlement, or encroachments into forests and other habitats.

Feluda

Scientists at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research — Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB) have developed a low-cost, paper-strip test which can detect the new coronavirus within an hour.

About:

- The test, named Feluda after a fictional detective character created by Satyajit Ray, is expected to cost around Rs 500 against the RT-PCR test that costs Rs 4,500 in private labs.
- The test is based on a bacterial immune system protein called Cas9. It uses cutting-edge gene-editing tool Crispr-Cas9 system. The team has repurposed it for diagnosis of COVID-19 genetic material.
- This technology is not limited to COVID-19 and can work on any DNA-RNA or single mutations, disease mutations etc.

INS Angre

Naval authorities in Mumbai feel that the number of COVID-19 cases among sailors is only going to increase as the test results of several Indian Navy personnel at INS Angre is expected any time.

About:

- INS Angre is the shore-based logistics and administrative support establishment of the Western Naval Command of Indian Navy.
- Located at Kala Ghoda in south Mumbai, it is the base depot ship for the Command.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

VIDYADAAN 2.0

Union HRD Minister launched national program VidyaDaan 2.0 for inviting e-learning Content contributions.

About:

- VidyaDaan is conceptualised as a common national program for individuals and organizations across the country to contribute e-learning resources for both school and higher education to ensure continuity of quality learning.
- The content will be used on the DIKSHA app to help millions of children across the country to continue their learning anytime and anywhere.
- Contributions can be made by educationists, subject experts, schools, colleges, Universities, Institutes, government and non-government organisations and individuals.
- The programme has been launched due to the increasing requirement for e-learning content for students in both school and higher education especially in the backdrop of situation arising out of COVID-19.

Related Info: The DIKSHA Platform of the Ministry has been operating since 2017 with more than 30 States and Union Territories leveraging DIKSHA for augmenting teaching and learning processes.

Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) gave its approval for fixation of Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for Phosphatic and Potassic (P and K) Fertilizers for the year 2020-21.

About:

- The approved rates for NBS will be 18 rupees 78 paise per kg for Nitrogen, 14 rupees 88 paise per kg for Phosphorus, 10 rupees 11 paise per kg for Potash and 2 rupees 37 paise per kg for Sulphur.
- The CCEA also approved the inclusion of a complex fertilizer namely Ammonium Phosphate under the NBS Scheme.
- The subsidy on the Phosphorus and Potassium will be provided on the subsidy rates approved by the CCEA to the fertilizer companies.

Background:

- Government is making available fertilizers, namely Urea and 21 grades of P&K fertilizers to farmers at subsidized prices through fertilizer manufacturers/importers.
- The subsidy on P&K fertilizers is being governed by NBS Scheme w.e.f 01.04.2010.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

Indian Initiative On Earth Biogenome Sequencing (IIEBS)

The Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) has been selected as one of the Biological Knowledge and Resource Centres of the Indian Initiative on Earth BioGenome Sequencing (IIEBS).

About:

- IIEBS is a nationwide project to decode the genetic information of all known species of plants and animals in the country.

- The whole genome sequencing of 1,000 species of plants and animals will be taken up in the initial phase of IIEBS to be completed over a period of five years at an estimated cost of ₹440 crore.
- The National Institute of Plant Genome Research, New Delhi is the coordinating centre for the nationwide project involving a total of 24 institutes.
- The project is part of the Earth BioGenome Project, an international initiative which aims to sequence the genetic codes of all of earth's eukaryotic biodiversity over a period of 10 years.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, EVENTS, AWARDS ETC

International Day Of Multilateralism And Diplomacy For Peace

On April 24 2020, the second official International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace is being celebrated.

About:

- Date of international observance: 24 April of every year.
- Background: The International Day was officially approved on 12 December, 2018 by United Nations General Assembly through a resolution.
- Objective: To disseminate the advantages of multilateralism and diplomacy for peace through educational and public awareness-raising activities.

English Language Day 2020

English Language Day 2020 at the UN is being celebrated on 23 April, 2020.

About:

- English is one of the two working languages of the UN, along with French. It has also become the lingua franca of international relations.
- English Language Day at the UN is celebrated on 23 April, the date traditionally observed as both the birthday and date of death of William Shakespeare.
- The Day is the result of a 2010 initiative by the Department of Global Communications, establishing language days for each of the Organization's six official languages. The days are as follows:
 - Arabic (18 December)
 - Chinese (20 April)
 - English (23 April)
 - French (20 March)
 - Russian (6 June)
 - Spanish (23 April)

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: US has recently signed up the first phase of a trade deal with China in a push to stop economic conflict. Critically analyse the deal in the light of the fact that a trade war has been going on for the past 18 months between these two countries thereby affecting the entire global trade.

Answer

A protracted trade war between US and China has been going on since America slapped heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items from China in March 2018, and China responded by imposing tariffs on billions of dollars worth of American imports. The dispute escalated after Washington demanded that China reduce its \$375 billion trade deficit with the US, and introduce verifiable measures for protection of Intellectual Property Rights, technology transfer, and more access to American goods in Chinese markets.

As per the IMF, the US-China trade tension was one factor that contributed to a significantly weakened global expansion late last year, as it cut its global growth forecast for 2019. It has exacerbated the uncertainty in the global trading environment, weakens the rules-based system, affects global sentiment negatively and adds to risk aversion globally. The tariffs can also hamper the rebound in the US economy, with consumption and jobs likely to take a hit, as these tariffs would be paid by American consumers and businesses. For China, the higher tariffs will have a significant negative effect on exports, against the backdrop of a slowing economy. South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore are the economies most at risk in Asia based on trade openness and exposure to supply chains involving China.

Key Highlights Of The Deal

- In the backdrop of negative impact of trade tension, as mentioned above, US and China has signed the first phase of the trade deal to diffuse the tension. This includes:
 - Intellection Property (IP) Protection and Enforcement,
 - ending forced technology transfer, dramatic expansion of American agriculture,
 - removing barriers to American financial services, ending currency manipulation,
 - rebalancing the US-China trade relationship and effective dispute resolution.
- The centrepiece of the deal is a pledge by China to purchase at least an additional \$200 billion worth of U.S. farm products and other goods and services over two years, over a baseline of \$186 billion in purchases in 2017.
- The deal, however, leaves in place tariffs on about \$360 billion in Chinese imports till the time the second phase of the trade deal is agreed.
- The US has dropped plans to impose tariffs on an additional \$160 billion in Chinese imports.

Analysis Of The Deal

- The deal shows how the two countries can resolve their differences and find solutions based on dialogue. This historic agreement includes a major commitment by China to make significant reforms in a wide range of critical areas and to make substantial additional purchases of American goods and services in the coming years. It aims to resolve some longstanding American concerns about Chinese trade abuses.
- However, the accord appears to leave questions about how Washington and Beijing will enforce its terms and prevent further tensions.
- The deal fails to address structural economic issues that led to the trade conflict, does not fully eliminate the tariffs that have slowed the global economy, and sets hard-to-achieve purchase targets, analysts and industry leaders said.
- Although the deal could be a boost to U.S. farmers, automakers and heavy equipment manufacturers, some analysts question China's ability to divert imports from other trading partners to the United States.