

COVID- 19 NEWS**Mission Sagar**

Indian Naval Ship Kesari has departed for Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, to provide Food Items, COVID related Medicines including HCQ Tablets and Special Ayurvedic Medicines as part of the Government of India outreach amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

About:

- This deployment as ‘Mission Sagar’, is in line with India’s role as the first responder in the region to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant difficulties.
- The deployment is in consonance with the Prime Ministers vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region ‘SAGAR.’
- The operation is being progressed in close coordination with the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.
- This is the first time that a single assistance mission is covering all island countries of the western Indian Ocean in one go — except Sri Lanka, for which a second set of medicines have been airlifted.

Related Info:

- The mission comes on the heels of ‘Operation Samudra Setu’ which is a part of India’s efforts to repatriate citizens stranded abroad.
- Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries were among the very first to receive India’s Covid assistance, which includes ‘Operation Sanjeevani’ in Maldives and special Air India flights with medicine consignments to Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles.

COVID Kavach Elisa

National Institute of Virology, Pune, has developed India’s first indigenous antibody-based ELISA test kit - COVID KAVACH for diagnosis of novel Corona Virus.

About:

- The kit has displayed high sensitivity and accuracy in the validation tests at different sites. It can test around 90 samples in approximately two and half hours. The technology has been transferred to pharmaceutical manufacturing companies for mass-scale production.
- This is the first time India has developed an indigenous Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test for coronavirus. ELISA is routinely used for detecting HIV infection.
- The test will detect antibodies in blood samples that the body develops in response to infection by the SARS-CoV-2 novel coronavirus.
- The ELISA test developed by NIV gains significance as the rapid antibody tests imported from China were found to be unreliable and hence the States were instructed not to use them for detecting previous novel coronavirus infection.

Comparison with RT-PCR test

- The RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test, which detects the RNA of the coronavirus, enables detection of current infection only.
- Whereas ELISA can map past infection, even in asymptomatic cases.

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Family Planning**

Experts have warned that a temporary ban on family planning services at government facilities and poor access to contraceptives during the lockdown will result in lakhs of unwanted pregnancies, leading to a spurt in unsafe abortions and maternal deaths.

About:

- An analysis, conducted by the Foundation for Reproductive Health Services (FRHS) India, estimates that nearly 2.56 crore couples may not be able to access contraception services during the period after the lockdown and until the return of normalcy by September.
- This will lead to a loss of 6.9 lakh sterilisation services, 9.7 lakh intra-uterine contraceptive devices (IUCDs) and 40.59 crore condoms, among other forms of contraception.
- As a result, there will be an additional 23 lakh unintended pregnancies, 6.79 lakh child births, 14.5 lakh abortions (including 8.34 lakh unsafe abortions) and 1,743 maternal deaths.

Related Info :

- Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India is a leading Indian NGO working since 2009. It is an affiliate of Marie Stopes International, a global organization providing personalized contraception and safe abortion services to women and girls across 37 countries.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

India-China Border Dispute

Rekindling tensions over boundary claims, Indian and Chinese troops have clashed at two points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) recently , leaving personnel injured on both sides.

About:

- The incidents took place in the Naku La sector — it's a mountain pass in Sikkim at an altitude of over 5000 metres — on May 9, and in a contested area near Pangong Tso, a lake in Ladakh, on the night of May 5-6.
- But the Army played down the two incidents as “temporary and short-duration face-offs” that were resolved by “local commanders as per mutually-accepted protocols” through dialogue and flag meetings. These kind of incidents do occur as boundaries are not resolved.

Past incidents

- The last major violent clash between the Indian and Chinese troops had taken place on the northern bank of the 134-km long Pangong Tso (Tso means lake), two-thirds of which is controlled by China as it extends from Tibet to Ladakh, in September 2019.
- There has, however, been a significant reduction in the border tensions since the 73-day troop confrontation in the Bhutanese territory of Doklam, near the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction in June-August 2017, which saw the two armies move additional infantry battalions, tanks, artillery and missile units towards the border.

State Of The World's Nursing Report 2020

During the ‘Year of the Nurse and Midwife,’ WHO has released the first ever State of the world's nursing report. It has been developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in partnership with the International Council of Nurses and the global Nursing Now campaign.

Report summary:

- Nursing is the largest occupational group in the health sector, accounting for approximately 59% of the health professions.

- The 27.9 million global nursing personnel include 19.3 million (69%) professional nurses, 6.0 million (22%) associate professional nurses and 2.6 million (9%) who are not classified either way.
- The global shortage of nurses is estimated to be 5.9 million nurses in 2018. The report calls for creating at least 6 million new nursing jobs by 2030, primarily in low- and middle-income countries.
- The countries accounting for the largest shortages (in numerical terms) in 2018 included Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Related Info :

The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife”, in honour of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. She was born on 12 May 1820.

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

National Technology Day

President Ram Nath Kovind greeted the scientific community on National Technology Day (May 11, 2020). This year, the focus will be on rebooting the economy through Science and Technology.

About:

The Technology Development Board (TDB) a statutory body of the Department of Science & Technology (DST) celebrates May 11 every year as National Technology Day to commemorate achievements of innovations and technological excellence in the country.

The day has a historical perspective:

- On May 11, 1998, India successfully carried out nuclear tests at Pokhran.
- The first indigenous aircraft "Hansa-3" was test flown at Bangalore on this day; and
- India also performed successful test firing of the Trishul missile on the same day.
- Since 1999, the day is being celebrated as National Technology Day.

Operation Shakti:

- Pokhran-II (a.k.a Operation Shakti-98) is the name assigned to the series of five nuclear bomb test explosions conducted by India at the Indian Army's Pokhran Test Range in May 1998.
- On May 11, 1998, India carried out three nuclear tests. Two days later, India carried out two more tests. Of the five detonations, the first was a fusion bomb and the remaining four were fission bombs.
- Subsequently, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared India a full-fledged nuclear state.
- It was the second Indian nuclear test; the first test, code-named Smiling Buddha, was conducted in 1974.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Bharosa

Union HRD Minister launched Central University of Odisha Helpline “Bharosa” on Cognitive Emotional Rehabilitation Services for University Students of Odisha.

About:

- The Central University of Odisha Helpline “Bharosa” and its Helpline Number 08046801010 seeks to address the problems of distressed students in the wake of COVID-19.

- The helpline aims at providing Cognitive Emotional Rehabilitation Services to all University Students of Odisha.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Discuss, how cryptocurrency can revolutionise India's financial sector?

Answer

Cryptocurrencies are a digital form of money that runs on a totally new monetary system. It is supported by a decentralized peer-to-peer network called the blockchain. Blockchain technology ensures that all transactions in cryptocurrencies are recorded in a public financial transaction database. For example Bitcoins.

A blockchain in simple terms is a series of connected blocks containing a record of data managed by a bunch of computers not owned by any single entity secured by using a cryptography principle. Cryptocurrency backed by Blockchain technology can revolutionise India's financial sector due to following factors:

- Digital payments are marred by inadequate digital infrastructure creating security concerns while making the international transfer and therefore, these payments are open to cyber-attacks that can interrupt transmission.
- Therefore, blockchain technology facilitates payment systems, decreasing the operational costs, human blunder, and falsification.
- It also facilitates banks to get rid of all intermediaries in the payment processing system to lower the costs to process payments between banks and clients.
- Blockchain technology can be of great use in administering trade finance transactions for the banks.
- Under the blockchain technology, all the documents such as Shipping bill, Tax invoices can be recorded in a centralized repository where all the parties involved can access the real-time data.
- It becomes essential for the banks and other financial institutions to build a database containing all the information of the customers including their identity proof like PAN card, passport, Aadhar card, driving license, etc. mainly to avoid the money laundering, other forms of frauds and complying with the regulatory KYC norms.
- Blockchain technology can help the banks to overcome the problem of establishing identity by offering cryptographic protection that ensures the involvement of all parties to the transactions.
- Blockchain technology can help the insurance companies (including re-insurers) and regulators to access the required data and it will, in turn, help them in settling the insurance claims at a much faster rate.
- It can be used to implement Smart Contracts. Smart Contracts are executed based on matching of terms and are validated by other parties instantaneously and without the need of an intermediary.
- Cryptocurrencies act as alternative investments. These currencies may enable tech savvy traders to hedge global volatility, as it did during the financial turmoil of 2012-13.

Conclusion

Cryptocurrency and blockchain reduces delays, conflicts, and confusion in many aspects of financial services. Thus, there is a need for the Fintech industry to jointly work with the RBI and the government on a constructive policy framework for cryptocurrencies in India.