

Current Affairs - Apr 2020

Month Type



- 99 Current Affairs were found in Period - April 11 - 20, 2020 for Type - All

Appointments

- ▶ AU Small Finance Bank appointed R V Verma as part-time chairman and Sanjay Agarwal has been re-appointed as MD and CEO.
- ▶ Anamika Roy Rashtrawar has been appointed by IFFCO Tokio General Insurance as its new MD & CEO.
- ▶ Govt appointed Kapil Dev Tripathi as new secretary to President Ram Nath Kovind.
- ▶ Indian Chess legend Viswanathan Anand has been named ambassador of World Wide Fund India. WWF is an international NGO, founded in 1961.
- ▶ International Monetary Fund (IMF) named several individuals to serve as IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva's External Advisory Group. It Includes former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan.
- ▶ New Chief Justices for the Bombay, Orissa and Meghalaya High Courts (HC) have been recommended by Supreme Court Collegium -
 1. Bombay High Court - Dipankar Datta
 2. Meghalaya High Court - Biswanath Somadder
 3. Orissa High Court - Mohammad Rafiq
- ▶ P. K. Purwar (BSNL CMD) has been given additional charge as CMD of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL).

[Top](#)

Awards

- ▶ 4 Indian-Americans have been awarded with Guggenheim fellowships 2020 for their exceptional creative ability in arts -
 1. Pradeep Sharma (University of Houston)
 2. Kavita Ramanan (Brown University)
 3. Dilip Da Cunha (Harvard University and Columbia University)
 4. Mukul Sharma (Dartmouth College)
 5. About 175 such fellowships are awarded each year, established in 1925.
- ▶ Abdelouahab Aissaoui became 1st Algerian Novelist to win International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) 2020 (13th edition) for his novel 'The Spartan Court'. He will receive grant of USD 50000, for English translation. The novel relates power struggle between Ottoman and French colonial powers in Algeria.
 1. It is shortlisted from 6 novels, where the other 5 authors will each receive USD 10,000.

[Top](#)

Books

- ▶ *Memoirs and Misinformation* Novel by Dana Vachon and Jim Carrey has been released.
- ▶ Book *Shuttling to the Top: The Story of P.V. Sindhu*, authored by Sports journalist V. Krishnaswamy has been released.
- ▶ Book *The Wizenard Series: Season One* created by Late American Basket baller Kobe Bryant and Wesley King has been released.
- ▶ Pulitzer Prize-winning American reporter Mary Jordan wrote a book *The Art of Her Deal: The Untold Story of Melania Trump*, based on US First Lady Melania Trump.

[Top](#)

Committees

1. ▶ A Government appointed panel headed by IBBI Chairperson M S Sahoo has submitted a report on “valuation professionals” and proposed an institutional framework for valuers by setting up National Institute of Valuers (NIV).
 1. A valuer is a professional who carries out inspections in order to help determine the current market value of property and/or land.
2. ▶ Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) constituted a 25-member Development Council for pulp, paper and allied industries (DCPPAI) headed by A S Mehta, President of J K Paper Ltd.
3. ▶ Govt. has set up high-level task force to work on cutting edge vaccine and drug testing for Covid-19 in India. It is co-chaired by principal scientific adviser to government K Vijay Raghavan and Niti Aayog member V K Paul.

Top

Days

1. ▶ Apr 13 is anniversary of Jallianwala Bagh massacre, when on 13 April 1919, Reginald Dyer ordered troops of British Indian Army to fire into a crowd of unarmed Indian civilians, killing over 1000 people.
2. ▶ Apr 11 is observed as National Safe Motherhood Day in India. Apr 11 is also marked as National Pet Day (US and several other nations).
3. ▶ Apr 11 is observed as World Liver day.
4. ▶ Apr 12 is marked as International Day of Human Space Flight. It commemorates Yuri Gagarin’s historic spaceflight on Apr 12, 1961.
 1. Day was proclaimed by UN in 2011. In 1957, first human made earth satellite Sputnik I was launched into outer space. On April 12, 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit earth successfully.
 2. In 2020 Apr 12 (Eastern) and 19 (Western) are also to be observed as Easter, which commemorates resurrection of Jesus from the dead, on third day after his burial following his crucifixion by Romans.
5. ▶ Apr 15 is observed as World Art Day, being observed since 2012.
6. ▶ Apr 16 is observed as World Voice Day.
7. ▶ Apr 17 is observed as World Hemophilia Day, observed by World Federation of Hemophilia. 2020 theme is *Get + Involved virtually and stay safe*.
8. ▶ Apr 18 is observed as World Heritage Day, also as International Day of Monuments and sites. It was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1983.
 1. 2020 Theme is *Shared Culture, Shared heritage and Shared responsibility*.
 2. This year, five Indian monuments illuminated on this occasion - Humayun’s Tomb, Qutub Minar, Safdarjung’s Tomb, Red Fort and Purana Qila.
 3. Minister of culture Prahlaad Singh Patel launched National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, to include 13 elements that are already included in UNESCO Representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
 1. It is a part of Vision 2024 of Ministry of Culture, to increase awareness about intangible cultural heritages.
 2. Intangible Cultural Heritage is representation, practice, knowledge, expression of skills. It involves non-physical intellectual property such as beliefs, folklore, traditions, customs and language.
9. ▶ Apr 20 is observed as UN Chinese Language Day, being observed since 2010.
10. ▶ April 14th is Birth Anniversary of B R Ambedkar. He campaigned against social discrimination towards untouchables (Dalits). He was independent India's first law and justice minister, and architect of Constitution of India. His Birth anniversary is observed as Social Justice Day, announced in 2018. Note that UN World Day of Social Justice is observed on Feb 20.
 1. April 14, 2020 is also observed as First World Chagas Disease Day, to increase awareness of Chagas disease.
 2. Apr 14 is also observed as National Fire Service Day in India.
11. ▶ UNESCO Observed Mar 14 as First Ever International Day of Mathematics, Proclaimed in 2019.
 1. Mar 14 is observed as International Pi (π) Day, observed since 1988.
 2. Mar 14 is also observed as International Day of Action for Rivers.

Top

Defence

1. ▶ US approved Torpedoes lightweight missiles and Harpoon air-launched missiles sales to India, for 155 million USD.

[Top](#)

Economy

1. ▶ Aditya Birla group's *Hindalco Industries* acquired US Based *Aleris Corporation* through its wholly owned subsidiary Novelis Inc. for an enterprise value of \$2.8 billion (Approx 21000 crores).
 1. Novelis will acquire Aleris' 13 plants across North America, Europe and Asia.
2. ▶ Amid COVID-19 Impact, RBI announced further measures -
 1. RBI has cut reverse repo rate to 3.75%, keeping othr rates unchanged. Current MPC Rates -
 1. Repo Rate - 4.40 %
 2. Reverse Repo - 3.75 %
 3. Bank Rate - 4.65 %
 4. CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio) - 3 %
 5. SLR(Statutory Liquidity ratio) - 18.00 %
 6. Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate - 4.65 %
 2. RBI announced to conduct Targeted Long-Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) 2.0 at policy repo rate for tenors up to 3 years for a total amount of up to 50000 crores.
 3. RBI eased Liquidity Coverage Ratio from 100% to 80%. LCR is assets held by banks to make sure its ongoing ability to meet short-term obligations are fulfilled.
 4. RBI will also provide 50,000 crores to institutions such as SIDBI, NABARD, NHB.
3. ▶ As per IMF's April update of World Economic Outlook (WEO) -
 1. India's growth to be to 1.9% from 5.8% earlier for FY21 (2020-21). India's growth is seen recovering sharply to 7.4% in next fiscal year (FY 22 (2021-22)).
 2. IMF warns of *worst global recession since Great Depression (1929-1930)*, due to COVID-19 Pandemic. Global economy is expected to shrink by 3%.
 3. China is seen growing 1.2% in 2020 and rebound to 9.2% in 2021.
 4. Asia will stall at 0% growth in 2020 for 1st time in 60 years, which includes Global Financial Crisis (4.7%) and Asian Financial Crisis (1.3%).
 5. US to shrink by 6 % and Europe by 6.6 %.
4. ▶ As per Japanese Firm Nomura, Indian economy will contract by 6.1 % in April-June quarter, and will expand only in December quarter.
 1. Economy will grow at 3.2 per cent in January-March 2020 Quarter, contract by 6.1 % in June - Aug quarter and 0.5 % in Sep - Dec quarter, before rising by 1.4 % in the last quarter of FY 21 (Jan - Mar 2021).
 2. Nomura Predicted Indian GDP to grow at -.5 % in FY 2020-21 (FY 21).
5. ▶ As per RBI data, Bank credit growth declined to 5 decade low to 6.14% in FY 20 (2019-20), due to lower demand and risk aversion among banks. Bank deposits grew by 7.93% to 135.71 lakh crores as against 125.73 lakh crores in 2019.
6. ▶ As per Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV), sales of Electric Vehicles increased by 20% in 2019-20. Sale of electric vehicles for 2019-20 included 3,400 cars, 152,000 two wheelers and 600 buses.
7. ▶ Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in partnership with SBI has launched a Unified Payments Interface (UPI) based payment platform, Bharat InstaPay to enable all types of channel partners of BSNL to digitize their payment transactions.
 1. Also, SBI waived service charges for all ATM transactions made on SBI / Other Bank ATMs till June 30, in line with RBI Directive.
8. ▶ Central Board of Direct Taxes clarified about Section 115 BAC, which was inserted recently into Income Tax Act 1961.
 1. According to section, a person receiving income other than family business shall be taxed under Section 115 BAC. This is to be furnished along with those submitted under Section 139 of act.
 2. Issue that arose if tax that was imposed under Section 115 BAC is to be considered under TDS.
 3. CBDT clarified -
 1. If a tax payer has income other than that received from his employer, and intends to get concessional rate under Section 115 BAC, then he should intimate the deductor each previous year.
 2. In case employee fails to make intimation, employer shall make TDS without considering provisions of Section 115 BAC.

9. ► Government amended Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy 2017, to prevent opportunistic acquisitions of Indian companies due to COVID-19 economic crisis.

1. Currently, any non-resident entity from countries sharing borders with India are allowed to make investments in India. However, entities in Bangladesh and Pakistan are required to obtain government permission.

2. After amendments -

1. Every investor from a neighbouring country is required to invest through Government route.
2. While transferring ownership, beneficiary is required to obtain the approval of Indian Government.
3. It mainly targets Chinese companies. With world entering lock down and China returning to normalcy, China is now looking to acquire prominent companies all over world.

10. ► Government in consultation with RBI has issued Guidelines for Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme 2020-21, to be issued in six tranches, with terms -

1. **Tranches -**

| S. No. | Tranche | Date of Subscription | Date of Issuance |
|--------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | 2020-21 Series I | April 20-24, 2020 | April 28, 2020 |
| 2. | 2020-21 Series II | May 11-15, 2020 | May 19, 2020 |
| 3. | 2020-21 Series III | June 08-12, 2020 | June 16, 2020 |
| 4. | 2020-21 Series IV | July 06-10, 2020 | July 14, 2020 |
| 5. | 2020-21 Series V | August 03-07, 2020 | August 11, 2020 |
| 6. | 2020-21 Series VI | Aug.31-Sept.04, 2020 | September 08, 2020 |

2. **Features -**

| Sl. No. | Item | Details |
|---------|------------------|---|
| 1 | Eligibility | For sale to resident individuals, HUFs, Trusts, Universities and Charitable Institutions. |
| 2 | Denomination | Multiples of gram(s) of gold with a basic unit of 1 gram. Minimum permissible investment is 1 gram. |
| 3 | Tenor | 8 years, with exit option after 5th year to be exercised on the interest payment dates. |
| 4 | Maximum limit | 4 KG for individual, 4 Kg for HUF and 20 Kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal. In case of joint holding, the investment limit of 4 KG will be applied to the first applicant only. |
| 5 | Issue price | Issue / redemption Price of Bond will be fixed on the basis of simple average of closing price of gold of 999 purity, Issue price will be 50 per gram less on digital payments. |
| 6 | Payment option | Payment for Bonds will be through cash (upto 20000) or demand draft or cheque or electronic banking. |
| 7 | Interest rate | Fixed rate of 2.50 % annum payable semi-annually on nominal value. |
| 8 | Collateral | Bonds can be used as collateral for loan. Bonds will be also be tradable on stock exchanges within a fortnight of the issuance. |
| 9 | Tax treatment | Interest on Gold Bonds shall be taxable as per provision of Income Tax Act 1961. Capital gains tax arising on redemption of SGB to an individual has been exempted. |
| 10 | Commission | Commission for distribution of bond shall be paid at the rate of 1% of total subscription and receiving offices shall share at least 50% of commission so received with agents. |
| 11 | Selling Channels | Scheduled Commercial Banks (except Small Finance Banks and Payment Banks), Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices, and recognised stock exchanges. |

11. ► Government laid down procedure to allocate quota for import of calcined pet coke in FY 21 (2020-21).

1. In October 2018, Government permitted imports of certain quantity of pet coke in order to use it as fuel in anode making. Earlier, govt had banned import of pet coke.

2. Import of petcoke was allowed only in lime kiln, cement, gasification and calcium carbide industries. Pet Coke is mainly used in aluminium industry as raw material.

3. India is largest consumer of pet coke. Pet coke emits over 11% more green house gases than coal.

12. ► Hydro power PSU NHPC conducted e-reverse auction for a 2,000 mega watt (MW) grid connected solar project. Against allocated capacity of 2,000 MW, lowest e-RA tariff of Rs 2.55 unit to 2.56 per unit was achieved.

13. ► ICICI bank launched voice banking services on Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, enabling customers to avail several services.

1. For this, ICICI Bank integrated its AI powered multi-channel chatbot, 'iPal', with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant.

14. ► India's TVS Motor Company's overseas subsidiary *TVS Motor Singapore Pte. Ltd.* acquired United Kingdom's 122 year old iconic sporting motorcycle brand 'Norton, in an all-cash transaction of £16 million.

15. ► India's first InvIT in the power sector, *IndiGrid* acquired Gurgaon Palwal Transmission (GPTL) from Sterlite Power, for 1080 crores. This would increase assets under management of IndiGrid by 10% to \$1.75 billion.

16. ► Jana Small Finance Bank launched *DigiGen* digital banking platform, where customers can digitally open a savings account and fixed deposit instantly.

17. ▶ Japanese financial Firm ORIX Corporation acquired 100% stake held by cash-strapped Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) in its wholly-owned subsidiary IL&FS Wind Power Services Ltd (IWPSL) for 6.05 crores.
18. ▶ People's Bank of China raised its stake in HDFC Ltd from .8 % to 1.01 % (1.75 crore shares), amid fall in HDFC shares due to COVID-19 Pandemic triggered slowdown. Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA), central bank of Saudi Arabia also picked up a 0.7% stake in HDFC.
19. ▶ RBI Conducted 4 Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTROs) of 3 year tenors -
 1. 1st TLTRO (Mar 27, 2020) -
 1. Notified amount was 25000 crores with 3-year tenor. Total bids received amounted to 60500 crores, with 25009 Crores as allotted amount.
 2. 2nd TLTRO (Apr 3, 2020) -
 1. Notified amount was 25000 crores with 3-year tenor. Total bids received amounted to 99760 crores, with 25016 Crores as allotted amount.
 3. 3rd TLTRO (Apr 9, 2020) -
 1. Notified amount was 25000 crores with 3-year tenor. Total bids received amounted to 113470 crores, with 25016 Crores as allotted amount.
 4. 4th TLTRO (Apr 17, 2020) -
 1. Notified amount was 25000 crores with 3-year tenor. Total bids received amounted to 61415 crores, with 25009 Crores as allotted amount.
 5. Facts -
 1. RBI started Long Term Repo Operation (LTROs), to enable banks to avail one year and three-year loans at same interest rate of one day repo. It will put pressure on banks to reduce their lending rates. Hence, there will be a decline in short term lending rates of banks.
 2. RBI Conducted 4 LTROs in Feb - Mar 2020 earlier.
20. ▶ RBI announced to conduct Targeted Long-Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) 2.0 at policy repo rate for tenors up to 3 years for a total amount of up to 50000 crores -
 1. LTRO / TLTRO enables banks to avail 1 / 3 year loans at same interest rate of one day repo. It puts pressure on banks to reduce their lending rates and make credit available for consumers at lesser rates.
 2. At least 50 % of funds availed under TLTRO 2.0 shall be apportioned as -
 1. 10 % in securities/instruments issued by Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs).
 2. 15 % in securities/instruments issued by NBFCs with asset size of 500 crore and below.
 3. 25 % in securities/instruments issued by NBFCs with assets size between 500 crores and 5,000 crores.
 3. First auction under TLTRO 2.0 will be conducted on April 23, 2020.
21. ▶ RBI cancelled licence of *Mapusa Urban Co-operative Bank of Goa*, as bank does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. On liquidation, every depositor is entitled to repayment of deposits up to 5 lakh, from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).
22. ▶ RBI launched 49th round of quarterly order books, inventories and capacity utilisation survey (OBICUS) of manufacturing sector. It provides valuable input for monetary policy formulation.
 1. RBI conducts OBICUS of manufacturing sector on a quarterly basis since 2008.
 2. As per last survey, capacity utilisation declined to 68.6 % in 3rd quarter of 2019-20 from 69.1 % in previous quarter.
23. ▶ Social Network Facebook invested INR 43574 crores in Jio Platforms, a unit of Reliance Industries, for 9.99% stake.
 1. Jio Platforms is parent of phone and data unit Reliance Jio Infocomm and various digital app platforms such as JioMart, JioSaavn and JioCinema.
 2. RIL and Facebook are exploring possibility of creating a super-app like China's WeChat, by leveraging Jio's reach and Facebook owned WhatsApp's ubiquity.
 3. It is Largest FDI in India's Tech Industry.
24. ▶ To help tackle situation arising from COVID-19 outbreak, RBI increased limit for Ways and Means Advances (WMA) to 2 Lakh Crores, for remaining part of first half of financial year 2020-21 (April 2020 to September 2020). It was 1.2 Lakh Crores Earlier.
 1. WMA is an RBI mechanism, to help States tide over temporary mismatches in cash flow of their receipts and payments.
25. ▶ With increasing global economic crisis due to COVID-19 Outbreak, Helicopter Money is a solution being suggested by economic specialists all over world. *Helicopter Money* term was framed by an American Economist Milton Friedman. It is monetary policy tool used for Quantitative Easing.

1. It aims to dump money into a struggling economy, by extending non-repayable money to governments from central bank.
2. It intends to make more money available for people to nudge them to spend more.
3. In India -
 1. Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao has suggested this for state governments to revive economic growth. He asked the RBI to release 5% of GDP as Helicopter money.
 2. CII also recommended similar arrangement, by recommending direct cash transfer of 5000 to all account holders whose annual income is below 5 lakh.

Top

International

1. ▶ Apple acquired Dark Sky, a weather app, which forecasts hyper-local weather predictions.
2. ▶ As per *Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT)*, India's response to COVID-19 pandemic is one of most stringent in world, scoring perfect 100.
 1. OxCGRT collects publicly available information on 13 indicators of government respons. South Africa, Israel, New Zealand and Mauritius are some other countries that scored a 100 in concerned tracker.
3. ▶ As per Gartner 2019 Digital Workplace Survey -
 1. India is world's most digitally dexterous (skilful) country, world as it has vast Gen Z workforce (*born between 1995 and 2009*), who are keen to learn new digitally powered skills.
 2. India is followed by UK and US.
4. ▶ Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) doubled available funds under its COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Facility to provide up to USD billion, amid high demand.
 1. This came after AIIB's announcement to make USD 5 billion available to help firms manage through COVID-19 pandemic.
5. ▶ Energy-to-agriculture conglomerate GP Global acquired lubricants assets of Grand Petroleum, Nigeria's leading lubricants player and part of Nosak Group, to strengthen its presence in Nigeria and west Africa.
6. ▶ First shipload of 1 million barrels of crude oil from UAE arrived at Mangalore, as part of India capitalizing on low global oil prices to fill its underground strategic oil reserves.
 1. India has built 5.33 million tonne of emergency storage, enough to meet its oil needs for 9.5 days.
 2. Reserves are built in underground rock caverns in Mangalore and Padur (Karnataka) and Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)
 3. Now, State-owned oil firms have been asked to buy oil at cheaper rates from market and fill them up, as Oil prices have declined by more than 60 % since January.
7. ▶ For 2019, China became leader in international patent filings via WIPO's Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) with a total of 58,990 applications surpassing US, which was at top since PCT began operations in 1978.
 1. Among Companies, For 3rd consecutive year, Chinese telecom firm Huawei topped global ranking with 4411 PCT applications, followed by Mitsubishi of Japan (2661), Samsung of South Korea (2334) and Qualcomm of US (2127).
 2. Nations -
 1. China - 58990
 2. USA - 57840
 3. Japan - 52660
 4. India Ranked 14th with merely 2053 filings.
8. ▶ India partnered with World Health Organization to implement National Polio Surveillance Network to contain COVID-19.
 1. With National Polio Surveillance Project, India eliminated polio in 2014. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with World Health Organization is to now use the project to control the spread of COVID-19.
9. ▶ Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) invited Proposals for 'COVID-19 Indo-U.S. Virtual Networks' that would allow Indian and U.S. scientists and engineers currently engaged in COVID-related research to carry out joint research activities through a virtual mechanism.
 1. IUSSTF was established in March 2000, as autonomous bilateral organization jointly funded by India and US, and promotes Science, Technology, Engineering, and Innovation.
10. ▶ Prices of West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the best quality of crude oil in the world, crashed below \$0 mark to -\$40.32 a barrel.
 1. It is For the time that US oil prices have turned negative. Last time the oil prices crashed was right after World War II.
 2. It means that seller will be paying the buyer of crude oil for each barrel that is bought.

3. This major downfall of crude oil prices has been triggered by growing glut of crude and a lack of storage space due to the lockdown imposed to control COVID-19 pandemic. Supply of crude is much more than demand, at present.
11. ▶ Ruling democratic party of President Moon Jae won South Korean elections 2020.
 1. South Korea is first country to hold national elections among COVID-19 pandemic.
12. ▶ Social media platform Facebook launched a third party fact checking system in Bangladesh, in partnership with Indian fact checking website *Boom*. It will discourage spread of fake news in Bangladesh.
13. ▶ United Nations (UN) released 2.5 million USD emergency humanitarian fund to help island nation of Vanuatu, which is affected by Cyclone Harold. It Affected Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands.
14. ▶ United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) partnered to empower consumers to contribute to global development agenda and support their respective governments in times of global crisis due to COVID-19.
15. ▶ United Nations adopted a consensus resolution (drafted by Mexico), calling for equitable, efficient and timely access to future vaccines developed to fight against COVID-19. It strengthens scientific international cooperation that is essential to combat COVID-19.
16. ▶ World Bank report *South Asia Economic Focus* -
 1. Indian Economy is expected to grow at 1.5% to 2.8% in FY 21 (2020-21), lowest since its balance of payment crisis in 1991.
 2. However, in coming years growth rate is expected to be 4% to 5%.

Top

Meetings

1. ▶ Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar participated in G-20 Extraordinary Agriculture Ministers Meeting through Video Conferencing, on issue of COVID-19 impacts on food security, safety and nutrition. Saudi Arabia is G-20 Chair for 2020.
2. ▶ Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman participated in virtual session of 2nd G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting under Saudi Arabian Presidency, to discuss global economic outlook amid evolving COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
 1. She also attended Plenary Meeting of International Monetary and Financial Committee.
 2. She also attended 5th Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of Shanghai Based New Development Bank, set up by BRICS Nations in 2014.
 1. NDB will provide assistance of 1 billion USD to India, to tackle COVID-19. India pitched NDB to enhance its COVID-19 Relief fund to 10 Billion USD.
3. Other related Meets -
 1. Health and Family welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan attended Video Conference of Health Ministers of G20 countries.
 2. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar participated in G-20 Extraordinary Agriculture Ministers Meeting through Video Conferencing, on issue of COVID-19 impacts on food security, safety and nutrition. Saudi Arabia is G-20 Chair for 2020.
 3. Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan participated in G20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' virtual Meeting. It was called by Saudi Arabia, as G20 President.
 4. G20 Digital Ministers' Meet attended by Minister for Law & Justice, Communications and Electronics & IT Ravi Shankar Prasad.
3. ▶ Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman participated in virtual session of 2nd G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting under Saudi Arabian Presidency, to discuss the global economic outlook amid evolving COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
 1. She also attended Plenary Meeting of International Monetary and Financial Committee.

Top

National

1. ▶ Aimed at further development of power sector, Ministry of Power issued draft proposal for amendment of Electricity Act 2003, as draft Electricity Act (Amendment) Bill 2020. Major amendments proposed -
 1. A Central Enforcement Authority to be set-up, with powers of Civil Court, to enforce performance of contracts related to dealing of power between related companies.

2. Proposed to increase strength of APTEL to seven apart from Chairperson, and further empower APTEL to enforce its decisions.
 3. For compliance of provisions, section 142 and section 146 of Electricity Act proposed to be amended to provide for higher penalties.
 4. Proposed to provide for a policy document for development of generation of electricity from renewable sources of energy. A minimum percentage of purchase of electricity from hydro sources of energy is to be specified by Commissions.
 5. Payment security made necessary to schedule distribution of electricity and facilitate cross border trade.
 6. Privatization of discoms using franchises and sub-licenses.
 7. Power Tariff is to be determined without subsidy.
2. ▶ According to *Mapping India's Energy Subsidies 2020* by International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) -
 1. India's energy subsidies dropped 35% from Financial Year FY17 to FY19, while its oil and gas subsidies increased by 65%.
 2. Health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19 will impact subsidy expenditure.
 3. ▶ Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launched All India Agri Transport Call Centre, to facilitate inter-state movement of perishables in current situation of lockdown due to COVID-19 threat.
 1. Call Centre numbers are 18001804200 and 14488. Call Centers are Operated by IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL).
 4. ▶ Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu inaugurated Daporijo bridge across Subansiri river (Brahmaputra tributary), constructed by Border Roads Organization (Also called Hangpan Dada Bridge).
 1. The bridge with great importance of linking roads leading to India-Arunachal Pradesh border, has been constructed in under a month.
 5. ▶ As per Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, sown crop area of summer crops has increased by 36%, on yearly basis. Rise has been mainly observed in rice cultivation.
 1. In Madhya Pradesh, harvesting has increased by 95%, Rajasthan has increased by 85% and Uttar Pradesh by 65%.
 6. ▶ GMR Airports Limited received *Letter of Award* for development and operations of Bhogapuram Greenfield International Airport in Andhra Pradesh. It involves building and maintaining Bhogapuram International Airport for 40 years, extendable by 20 years.
 7. ▶ General News / Events / Conferences (Apr 11-20, 2020)
 1. Government launched *Fit India Active Day* Programme, under Fit India Initiative. It aims to make sure children practice fitness even when they stay home.
 2. Ministry of Tourism launched *Dekho Apna Desh* webinar, to cater in-depth information about tourist destinations in country.
 3. Ahmedabad railway station at Kalupur (Western Railway) became 1st station of Indian Railways to install a "Walk Through Mass Sanitizing Tunnel", amid COVID-19 Outbreak.
 4. HRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' launched a week-long 'Bharat Padhe Online' campaign, for crowd sourcing of ideas to improve online education ecosystem of India.
 5. *Food Bank* initiative is introduced by Imphal East District Administration in Manipur, to provide immediate aid in the form of free food to poor and needy who are facing scarcity of essential commodities due to lockdown.
 6. Google launched a virtual Braille keyboard for Android users with low vision or blindness, to enable these people to type on their phones without additional hardware.
 7. To overcome delays and swift delivery of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and masks, DRDO shifted its testing facility from Defence Research Development Establishment (DRDE) Gwalior to Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS) Delhi.
 8. National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Hyderabad field office is training over 28 lakh community leaders through online programs to practice social behaviours required to control transmission of COVID-19 cases in villages.
 8. ▶ Government launched *Krishi Rath* application, to help farmers to transport their agriculture produce to mandis.
 1. Farmer has to post quantity of agricultural produce he wishes to transport, to get availability of truck and price quote for load, from transport aggregators.
 9. ▶ Govt. allowed conversion of surplus rice available with Food Corporation of India (FCI), to be converted to ethanol for utilization in making alcohol-based hand-sanitizers and in blending for Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme, under National Policy on Biofuels, 2018.

10. ▶ India tightened curbs on import of refined palm oil by putting more conditions for inbound shipments. Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGTF) imposed restrictions on imports of refined palm oil, as per which -
 1. Import authorisation -
 1. Importer have to seek a license or permission or no-objection certificate for imports.
 2. Applications for import authorisation should be accompanied with pre-purchase agreement and details of import for past 3 years.
 3. Validity period of import licenses/authorizations for refined palm oil will be 6 months, in place of usual 18 months.
 2. Rules of origin criteria -
 1. Customs will enforce *rules of origin* criteria for import of these items originating from Nepal and Bangladesh.
 2. Rules of origin certificate is a key document required for exports to those countries with which India has trade agreements.
 3. An exporter has to submit a 'certificate of origin' at the landing port of the importing country (in case of refined palm oil it will be Indian ports). This certificate is essential to prove where the goods come from.
 3. Facts -
 1. India is world's largest importer of vegetable oils, buying 15 million tonne annually. Of this, palm oil comprises 9 million tonne and the rest 6 million tonne is soybean and sunflower oil. Indonesia and Malaysia are the two countries which supply palm oil.
11. ▶ India's Public service broadcaster Prasar Bharati rolled out a new channel called *DD Retro*, specifically dedicated to old classics of Doordarshan. It has been launched by Prasar Bharti in wake of COVID-19 pandemic.
12. ▶ Ministry of Environment recategorized all bulk drugs manufacturers under category 'A' to category 'B2', amending An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2006.
 1. Projects under Category A require mandatory EIA. On the other hand, projects under Category B2 are exempted from EIA. This recategorization will fasten the process.
 2. EIA is process to evaluate environmental impacts caused due a proposed project, backed by Environment Protection Act 1986. There are four stages in EIA cycle - screening, scoping, public hearing and appraisal.
 3. Categories - Categories A and B have only one difference.
 1. Category A projects require mandatory environmental clearance and does not undergo screening.
 2. Category B projects undergoes screening process.
 3. Under Category B, there are two types - Category B1 and Category B2. Category B1 are those projects that require EIA for appraisal and also has to undergo public consultation and category B2 are those that do not require EIA.
13. ▶ Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) asked states to set up renewable energy (RE) equipment manufacturing parks, offering several incentives.
 1. MNRE asked state governments / port authorities to identify land parcels of 50-500 acre for setting up such parks.
 2. Presently, India has around 10 GW of wind equipment manufacturing capacity. In case of solar cells and modules, India imports about 85 % of its requirement.
14. ▶ NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and National Informatics Centre jointly launched CollabCAD initiative, aiming to provide a platform to find solutions in terms of 2D drafting and 3D product design. This will act as a platform for children to improve their innovative ideas.

Top

Science

1. ▶ An earth size exoplanet *Kepler-1649c* has been found by researchers, while looking through old observations from Kepler Telescope. The planet orbits in its star's habitable zone, which supports liquid water.
 1. Of all exoplanets found by Kepler, this one is most similar to Earth's temperature and size.
 2. It is 1.06 times larger from Earth. It receives from its host star the 75 % of light that Earth receives from sun, making its temperature similar to earth.
 3. A year on Kepler-1649c is equivalent to only 19.5 days on Earth, as it orbits its red dwarf star very closely.
2. ▶ Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS) has developed a compact solid-state sensor to detect heavy metal ions in water, which can help onsite detection in remote areas.
 1. Heavy metal ions such as lead, mercury and cadmium pose severe potential threats to living beings as they can easily be accumulated in body and cannot be detoxified easily.

2. Researchers have developed a compact solid-state sensor to detect heavy metal ions, down to 0.4 parts per billion (ppb) for efficient onsite detection. If water containing heavy metal ions are added to composite film, emission of the film quenches within seconds.
3. ► Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) approved use of medicine Sepsivac for testing on COVID-19 Patients, developed through its New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI) program.
 1. CSIR has been supporting *Cadila Pharmaceuticals* since 2007, for developing a drug to save lives of critically ill patients suffering from Gram-negative sepsis. The drug has been shown to reduce the mortality of critically ill patients by more than half.
 2. Similarity of symptoms under Gram-negative sepsis and COVID-19 has enforced CSIR to take this step.
4. ► For the first time, NASA scientists measured wind speed on a brown dwarf (located 32 light-years from Earth), an object larger than Jupiter, but not quite massive enough to become a star.
 1. It uses findings from NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope, managed by Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California.
 2. Researchers detected winds moving around planet at 1,425 mph (2,293 kph). Comparing to Neptune's atmosphere which features fastest winds in our solar system, at 1,200 mph (about 2,000 kph).
5. ► IIT Mandi developed a high-speed magnetic Random Access Memory (RAM), which is faster, energy-efficient and stores more data in a smaller volume as compared to existing data storage technologies.
 1. In Spin-Transfer Torque-Magnetic Random Access Memory (STT-MRAM), data is represented as a spin of electrons, utilizing spinning electrons to transmit and process information. It is Unlike normal electronic devices that are driven by electron charges.
 2. This cutting-edge technology promises better storage capabilities than conventional electric charge-based RAM.
6. ► NASA announced to launch its flight of astronauts on May 27, under Demo-2 Mission. It is first flight of NASA in 9 years.
 1. Mission is to use SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket.
 2. Mission of NASA sending astronauts to International Space Station has been named "Commercial Crew Programme".
7. ► New species of green pit viper discovered in Arunachal Pradesh, named Salazar's pit viper after Salazar Slytherin, a fictional character in J.K Rowling's book series "Harry Potter".
8. ► Researchers at Agharkar Research Institute Pune developed a sensitive and low-cost sensor to rapidly detect bacteria, which can detect as low as ten bacterial cells from a sample size of one milliliter in under 30 minutes.
 1. Called 'bug sniffer,' this biosensor uses synthetic peptides, magnetic nanoparticles, and quantum dots to detect the presence of bacteria, providing a cost- and time-effective way of screening water and foodborne pathogens.
9. ► Researchers at Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) discovered several Lithium-rich giant stars, indicating that Lithium is being produced in stars and accounts for its abundance in interstellar medium.
 1. They also associated such Lithium enhancement with central Helium-burning stars, also known as red clump giants, opening up new vistas in evolution of red giant stars.
 2. Present measurement of Lithium in interstellar medium and very young stars is about 4 times more than primordial value. Thus, identifying sources of Lithium enrichment in our Galaxy has been a great interest to researchers to validate Big Bang Nucleosynthesis as well as a stellar mixing process.
10. ► Researchers from Indian Institute of Geomagnetism Mumbai developed a new Artificial Neural Networks based global Ionospheric Model (ANNIM), to predict ionospheric electron density with larger data coverage - a crucial need for communication and navigation.
 1. ANNs replicate processes in human brain to solve problems such as pattern recognition, classification, clustering, generalization, linear and nonlinear data fitting, and time series prediction.
 2. Ionospheric variability is greatly influenced by both solar originated processes and neutral atmosphere origin, making it difficult to model. Accurate prediction of electron density is still a challenging task.
 3. The model developed by IIG researchers may be utilized as a reference model in ionospheric predictions and has potential applications in calculating Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) positioning errors.
11. ► Scientists at Institute of Nano Science and Technology Mohali developed an efficient, low-cost electro-catalyst from fish gills that can help develop environmentally friendly energy conversion devices.
 1. This bio-inspired carbon nanostructure can help overcome bottleneck in realization of several renewable energy conversion and storage technologies such as fuel cell, biofuel cell, and metal-air battery.
 2. Present strategy enriches a route to synthesize low-cost, highly efficient bioinspired electrocatalyst that is better than commercial Platinum on carbon (Pt/C) catalyst and could be utilized as next-generation nonprecious carbon-based

electrocatalyst for energy conversion and storage applications.

12. ▶ Scientists witnessed biggest star explosion (called supernovas) observed till now, called SN2016aps. This supernova was up to 100 times larger than our sun and happened in a galaxy far away (3.6 billion light years from Earth).

1. The stars had been part of a binary system, two stars pulled toward each other through gravity. The joined star exploded in a supernova, in Feb 2016.

Top

Sports

1. ▶ *Feifei* has been named as mascot for 4th Asian Para Games to be held in Hangzhou (China) in 2022. It will feature 22 sports with Taekwondo and Para-Canoe as debutant games.

Top

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