DAILY NEWS DIARY

(DnD)

17.04.2020

For Prelims & Mains
Dear Student,

Warm Greetings.

- DnD aims to provide every day news analysis in sync with the UPSC pattern.
- It is targeted at UPSC – Prelims & Mains.
- Daily articles are provided in the form of Question and Answers
  - To have a bank of mains questions.
  - And interesting to read.
  - Providing precise information that can be carried straight to the exam, rather than over dumping.

Enjoy reading.

THE HINDU - TH
INDIAN EXPRESS - IE
BUSINESS LINE - BL
ECONOMIC TIMES - ET
TIMES OF INDIA - TOI

Essay Paper

Editorial

Q – How is technology coming to aid of the health sector, during COVID-19 times in India?

INTRO = It was way back in 2000 that telemedicine was first employed in India, but the progress has been excruciatingly slow, until the pandemic. The pandemic has contributed, in no small measure, to the understanding of the myriad ways in which available technologies have not been put to better use. Among the primary uses is telemedicine, Whether it is the employ of state-of-the-art technology in the discovery of cures or vaccines, or traditional technology services to enhance health care and consultations, or even tools that keep people at home occupied/productive, it is clear that technology will serve humanity at one of its darkest moments.

The Centre’s recent guidelines allowing for widespread use of telemedicine services came as a shot in the arm for telehealth crusaders in the country.

- Among them the Telemedicine Society of India has long been battling to use the technology in its complete arc to reach remote areas in India.
- Finding consonance with the rest of the world, where several nations have deployed telemedicine to reach people who have been unable to come to hospital, to reduce footfalls in hospitals, and to even provide medical and mental health counselling to countless people.

However, it does seem as if the medical community was only held back by the lack of legislation to enable tele consultations. With the advantages in the current scenario being peculiar as to –
No sooner was the policy announced, than hospitals and clinicians hurried to jump onto the bandwagon, advertising contact information for patients.

The advancement of telecommunication capabilities over the years has made the transmission of images and sound files (heart and lung sounds, coughs) faster and simpler.

Pilot telemedicine experiments in ophthalmology and psychiatry have proven to be of immense benefit to the communities.

While unleashing the full potential of telemedicine to help people, experts and government agencies must be mindful of the possible inadequacies of the medium, and securing sensitive medical information.

GS 2

➢ International Relations

Q – Explain the new U.S-China tiff about Nuclear tests?

INTRO = China may have secretly set off low-level underground nuclear test explosions despite claiming to observe an international pact banning such blasts, the U.S. State Department stated. The finding, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, may worsen ties already strained by U.S. charges that the global COVID-19 pandemic resulted from Beijing’s mishandling of a 2019 outbreak of the coronavirus in the city of Wuhan.

U.S. concerns about Beijing’s possible breaches of a “zero yield” standard for test blasts have been prompted by –

1) Activities at China’s Lop Nur nuclear test site throughout 2019
2) its use of explosive containment chambers, extensive excavation activities at Lop Nur and a lack of transparency on its nuclear testing activities
3) Beijing’s lack of transparency included blocking data transmissions from sensors linked to a monitoring centre operated by the international agency that verifies compliance with a treaty banning nuclear test explosions.

“The pace and manner by which the Chinese government is modernising its stockpile is worrying, destabilizing, and illustrates why China should be brought into the global arms control framework,” said a senior U.S. official.

While, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that China was committed to a moratorium on nuclear tests and said the U.S. was making false accusations.

For Prelims –

The 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) allows activities designed to ensure the safety of nuclear weapons. While, Zero yield refers to a nuclear test in which there is no explosive chain reaction of the type ignited by the detonation of a nuclear warhead.

GS 3

➢ Technology

Q – Describe the ‘Voice based diagnosis tool’ developed by Mumbai team for COVID-19 detection?

BACKGROUND = While several foreign universities are trying to launch a voice-based AI tool for COVID-19 detection, an Indian tool is fully functional and currently in use in Italy to successfully identify COVID-19 patients. This tool is being currently used by the University of Rome to detect COVID-19 patients with 98% accuracy. According to the students and the professor from DY Patil Institute of Bio Technology and Bio Informatics, Mumbai, the tool can be used in Smartphone’s. As someone speaks to the microphone on the app, the tool breaks down the voice in multiple parameters such as frequency and noise distortion. These values are then compared to a normal
person’s values and the patented technique then determines if the patient is positive or not.

Timbre is Key

According to Giovanni Saggio, professor at the Rome university’s Engineering department, the audio-based disease diagnosis tool can find coronavirus from the timbre of the voice. Each human voice has 6,300 parameters, the human ear is not able to distinguish them, but artificial intelligence does. Each one of our internal organs is sort of a resonator, so if we have a problem with our lungs or our heart, this is reflected in our voice. The same person has one voice when they are healthy, and another if they have a pathology. Since coronavirus compromises lungs and airwaves, the voice is definitely affected. The current novel coronavirus cases could be picked this way.

Priya Garg, from the Mumbai team - believes this tool can be of great impact in the first level of screening.

Economic Development

Q – State the Agriculture Ministry’s Food Production targets for the Kharif and Rabi Seasons, 2020?

BACKGROUND = On the back of a normal monsoon forecast, the Agriculture Ministry is targeting a record food grain production of 298.3 million tonnes for 2020-21, higher than the 291.95 million tonnes estimated for 2019-20.

As stated at a National Conference on Agriculture-Kharif 2020 Campaign, both rice and wheat production targets are minimally higher than the previous year. However, the focus is on driving the growth in pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds. And also the India Meteorological Department issued its first forecast for the monsoon, predicting normal rainfall. Thus –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Target for 2020-21</th>
<th>Previous year target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice (barely higher)</td>
<td>117.5 million tonnes</td>
<td>117.47 million tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wheat (steady)</td>
<td>106.21 million tonnes</td>
<td>106.21 million tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals and millets (high)</td>
<td>48.7 million tonnes</td>
<td>45.24 million tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses (high)</td>
<td>25.3 million tonnes</td>
<td>23 million tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oilseeds (major priority)</td>
<td>36.64 million tonnes</td>
<td>34.19 million tonnes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) The Agriculture Ministry hopes to **ramp up production of coarse cereals this year**, but admits that the challenge is how to create demand for nutricereals or millets.

2) With regard to **pulses**, the entire increase projected to come from the kharif season.

3) **Oilseeds are a major priority**, especially due to the disruption in edible oil imports caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. One challenge could be a shortfall in supply of soyabean seeds to the tune of 3.2 lakh quintals, due to unseasonal rains at the time of harvesting the seed crop.
### Snippets

**GS 2**

- **Governance**
  - COVID-19 Status Check.

- Fresh cases rise by over 800, with the tally touching over 10,824 active cases, with 420 deaths. The Health Ministry noted that India’s case fatality rate is 3.3% and percentage of people recovered is 12.02% (1541).

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**GS 3**

- **Economic Development**
  - Textile and clothing exports drop by 6% during 2019-2020.
    - According to the available data, textile and clothing exports in 2018-2019 were worth $35.9 billion and from April 2019 to March 2020 it was worth $33.8 billion (with the fall being due to Covid-19).
    - However, demand is expected to rebound in July, with a special stimulus package needed from the government to help the industry get back on track.

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- **Reasons for Rupee hitting a new low of – 76.87 against the dollar –**
  - The central bank has not been aggressive in stemming the rupee depreciation
  - There is volatility in dollar-index trading.
  - Rupee shall keep trading weak on the back of higher gold prices along with a slowing economy
  - Consequence of the fall being = Depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah and Indian rupee increases risks for some companies with currency mismatches and heavy reliance on U.S. dollar debt.
➤ How about this today!?

Identify the descending order of most COVID-19 positive Indian cases found abroad?

a. Iran – Italy – USA – Singapore  
b. Gulf – Singapore – Italy – Malaysia  
c. USA – Italy – France – Portugal  
d. Gulf – Italy – Singapore – USA

➤ Hey from Yesterday....

Consider the following statements –

A. The Indian government had said that it was committed to meeting relief and rehabilitation requirements “through domestic efforts”.

B. In August 2018, the Indian government had refused to accept offers of aid from several countries including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and the Maldives during the Kerala floods.

C. Thus far, the government had been only open to contributions from “NRIs, PIOs and international Companies”.

Which of the above statements is correct regarding the donation offer to PM CARES fund from Rosoboronexport, a Russian firm being a departure from precedent for New Delhi?

a. A alone  
b. C alone  
c. A, C  
d. A, B

Answer: d