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**MADE EASY
WEEKLY CURRENT
AFFAIRS**

WEEK-2

8th May - 14th May

Targeted Examinations:

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Exams,
SSC and Banking Exams**

Current Affairs MADE EASY

(8th May to 14th May 2020)

8th May 2020

Labour Laws: UP Govt. passed Ordinance

- The Uttar Pradesh Government has passed an ordinance to suspend labour laws in the state for three years, citing reasons to boost industrial investment and also help the migrants who have returned back to the state due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- As per an estimate, around 7 lakh migrant workers from all over the country have returned back to their state during lockdown period.
- **Key Highlights:**
 - The ordinance will allow the industries to freely employ large number of migrant workers.
 - The ordinance applies to new factories and existing businesses as well.
 - The ordinance does not include Building and other Construction Workers Act, Bonded Labour Act, Workmen Compensation Act and Section 5 of Payment Wages Act.
 - The ordinance will suspend laws that related to occupational safety, industrial disputes, contract workers, trade union related laws and laws related to migrant labourers.
 - **Note:** As labour is mentioned in the Concurrent list of Constitution of India, therefore, an approval of Union Government is required.

Styrene

- Styrene is a chemical compound, which is also known as Vinyl Benzene, Ethyl Benzene and Phenyl Benzene. Styrene Gas is colourless and odourless. The gas spreads in air very quickly.
- Styrene gas is generally used in the making fan blades and other cutlery. It is also used in making containers where cosmetic products are stored.
- The Styrene gas affects respiratory system. It causes chest congestion, gasping, air hunger and wheezing. It slowly paralyses the lung muscles causing complete respiratory paralysis. This leads to death due to oxygen deprivation.
- **Context:** The Styrene Gas leak from a South Korean electronics giant has claimed lives of at least 11 people and affected more than 1000 residents in Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

MahaKavach

- MahaKavach is a real-time digital contact tracing mobile application which enables citizens to contribute and assist the health authorities in contact tracing, geo-fencing and tracking of quarantined COVID-19 patients.
- It has been launched by the Government of Maharashtra.
- The app will not be accessible to everyone, as the state government aims to use it for targeted cases only.

9th May 2020

Prime Minister Research Fellowship (PMRF) Scheme

- PMRF Scheme has been launched to improve quality of research in higher educational institutions. The main aim of the scheme is to attract best talent into the research. The Scheme was first introduced in the Union Budget 2018-19.
- The institutes which are eligible under PMRF scheme include IITs, IISc Bengaluru and other top central universities and NITs.
- **Context:** The Union Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) recently announced various amendments to Prime Minister Research Fellowship Scheme.

Key Highlights

- The new amendment makes GATE score mandatory for the students of any other institutes other than the central institutes (such as IISc, NIT, IIT, IIIT).
- From the academic year 2020-21, two channels of entries, one under direct entry and other under lateral entry are to be conducted to students willing to pursue their PhD under the PMRF scheme.
- Under the scheme, a dedicated division called “Research and Innovation Division” was created to boost research.

Stringency Index

- Stringency Index which has been created by Oxford University shows how strict a country’s measures were, and at what stage of the pandemic spread the country enforced them. As per the index, India imposed its strictest measures much earlier than other countries.
- The Stringency Index is a number from 0 to 100 that reflects these indicators. A higher index score indicates a higher level of stringency. It is among the metrics being used by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker.
- These indicators examine containment policies such as school and workplace closings, public events, public transport, stay-at-home policies, etc.

- The highest scorers on this index were of Iceland, Hong Kong, Croatia, and Trinidad & Tobago. India scored below Australia, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea because it scored 0 for controlling its cases.

World Migratory Bird Day 2020

- World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2020 was observed on 9th May. It helps to raise global awareness about threats faced by migratory birds, their ecological importance, and need for international cooperation to conserve them. It was observed under the theme '*Birds Connect Our World*'.
- It was organized by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) together with Environment for the Americas (EFTA).
- The first WMBD was celebrated in 2006.
- **Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)**
 - Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), also referred to as the Bonn Convention, provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the range States and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
 - CMS is the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.

10th May 2020

SARFAESI Act

- The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act, 2002 (also known as the SARFAESI Act) allows banks and other financial institution to auction residential or commercial properties (of Defaulter) to recover loans.
- The banks utilize the Act as tool to recover bad loans, especially the non-performing assets.
- It also enforces security interests of the banks without intervention of the court. In order to recover a debt, the act empowers the financial institutions in India to take over immovable property.
- **Context:** The Supreme Court has recently upheld a notification issued by Government under which the cooperative societies have also come under SARFAESI Act. The SC has also ruled that the Cooperative Banks have also come under the definition of banks under Banking Regulation Act, 1949. The SC has also ruled that under SARFAESI Act, the Parliament has powers to provide procedures for recovery of loans under the act.

Mission Sagar

- Government of India has launched Mission Sagar, an outreach programme which aims at providing food items, Ayurvedic medicines related to COVID-19, Hydroxychloroquine tablets to Maldives, Madagascar, Seychelles and Comoros.
- Indian Naval Ship Kesari has been deployed under this mission. The operation is being conducted under close cooperation of Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs.
- In 2015, India introduced SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), its vision of Indian Ocean which aims to seek economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours.

11th May 2020

Pranavayu Programme

- Bengaluru City Corporation recently launched Pranavayu Programme to create awareness about the respiratory health of people.
- The initiative aims to help people in increasing oxygen level in their body by themselves. This will help them to keep track about their health before their ailments become fatal.
- It was launched in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic which causes Hypoxia (deficiency of oxygen in tissues). COVID-19 stimulates breathing difficulties through chemical reactions. When a person is infected with COVID-19, the virus binds itself with the haemoglobin in Red Blood Cells. This is the main reason for disruption in respiratory process due to Coronavirus.

Suraksha Store Initiative

- Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution has launched Suraksha Store Initiative which aims at health and safety of the citizens during lockdown.
- The Ministry has joined hands with start-ups Safejob and Seekify with objective to educate the owners of Kirana store owners all over the country about COVID-19, protocols required to be followed and also about COVID-19 safety guidelines.
- The protocols that are to be used in the initiative to educate the store persons were decided by FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India). It also included norms of social distancing and hygiene in all retail outlets. The initiative also aims at using Arogya Setu app to find a store that is operated under the initiative.

Defence Research Ultraviolet Sanitizer (DHRUVS)

- The Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad, of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has developed Defence Research Ultraviolet Sanitizer (DHRUVS), an ultraviolet cabinet to sanitize mobile phones, laptops, iPads, passbooks, challans and paper.
- It can also be used to sanitize currency notes and papers. It provides 360-degree exposure to UV rays to the objects placed inside the cabinet. It is highly useful to sanitize electronic gadgets.
- **Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI):** It is a technology where Ultraviolet rays are used as disinfectant. In this, the short wavelength UV rays having wavelength between 200 nm and 300 nm are used as a germicide. They are highly absorbed by nucleic acids. When absorbed, the nucleic acids lose their capability of replication. Also, the nucleic acid disintegrates shortly leading to death of the organism.

National Technology Day

- National Technology Day is observed every year on May 11, in order to remind India's technological advancements.
- This year, the day was observed under the theme *Focusing on Rebooting the economy through Science and Technology*.
- On May 11, 1998, India successfully fired the Shakti-I nuclear missile at an Army test range in Rajasthan's Pokhran. Two days later, the country conducted two more nuclear tests as a part of the same operation, following which India joined the elite club of nuclear power nations.

12th May 2020

FIR Aapke Dwar Yojana

- Madhya Pradesh Government has launched FIR Aapke Dwar Yojana, under which a person need not go to the police station to lodge a complaint.
- The scheme has been launched in 23 police stations as a pilot project. This includes both rural and urban areas. The scheme will also enable on spot FIR registrations. When the complaints are serious, they will be forwarded to senior officers.
- Along with the scheme, Government has also launched a helpline 'Dial 112' which will provide instant ambulance services, fire fighting services and also will enable to contact the police within a short period of time.
- **Note:** The Constitution of India does not provide any rights over First Information Report (FIR). The legality of FIR is defined by the Section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

Swasthvayu

- National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL, Bengaluru) of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has developed a ventilator named Swasthvayu.
- The ventilator developed is a Non-Invasive BiPAP Ventilator which is made of built-in biocompatible coupler and a high efficiency filter.
- The ventilator includes provisions to connect oxygen concentrator externally.

Champions Portal

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has launched Champions Portal which will act as a technology driven control room cum management information system.
- The portal aims at creating modern ICT tools to assist MSMEs. It will act as a control room that will provide information to the industries. It includes video conferences, internet and telephones. These systems are enabled with Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.
- The system is to be completely integrated with Centralized Public Grievances and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) which was developed by the National Informatics Centre along with Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and Directorate of Public Grievances.
- Champions stand for Creation and Harmonious Application of Modern Processes.

Atal Pension Yojana

- Atal Pension Yojana was launched to provide old age income security to people of India, especially working in the unorganized sector. It was launched by PM Modi in 2015. The scheme is implemented by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) operating under Ministry of Finance.
- The Scheme can be subscribed by any Indian citizen of age 18 to 40 years. Upon enrolment, the scheme provides a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs 1000 to Rs 5000 on attaining 60 years of age. Also, when the pensioner dies, it amounts to guaranteed pension for lifetime to the spouse. In case of death of the both the subscriber and spouse, a nominee shall claim the amount.
- **Context:** Atal Pension Yojana has completed 5 years of its implementation. The total enrolment under the scheme as per recent data is 2.25 crore.

13th May 2020

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, a new flagship scheme, under which a financial package of 20 lakh crore has been announced amid concerns of economic crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic. The economic package is 10% of the GDP.
- Under the scheme, the Government of India is to support key sectors and also help achieve measures undertaken by Reserve Bank of India. The package will also focus on strengthening local markets and supply chains.
- The scheme will pay special attention on tax payers, farmers, labourers, cottage industries and MSMEs. The main aim of the scheme is to become self-reliant.
- **Vocal for Local:** The scheme will not only help to strengthen the chain of local supply but will also promote the locally produced products.
- **Key Highlights**

Under the new scheme, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced following measures for different sectors:

MSME

1. Collateral free loans

The loans that are worth Rs. 3 lakh crore are made collateral free. This is extended to firms whose outstanding loans are Rs. 25 crore or those firms whose annual turnover is Rs. 100 crore.

2. Stressed MSMEs

Through debt-based scheme, Rs 20,000 crore is being infused in to the economy. This will help to benefit stressed MSMEs. Under this, Government will provide Rs 4,000 crore separately through CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises). The Non-Performing Assets are also eligible to claim as beneficiary under the scheme.

3. Fund of Funds

The Government is to infuse Rs. 50,000 crore by creating fund of funds. A corpus of Rs 10,000 crore is to be infused through mother fund and daughter fund (funds created for venture capital) framework.

4. New Definition of MSME

- The Government has changed the definition of MSMEs. Previously, an enterprise with investment up to Rs. 25 lakh was called a micro unit. Under the new definition, a firm up to investment of Rs. 1 crore is to be called Micro

unit, of Rs. 10 crore is to be called as small unit and investment greater than Rs. 20 crore will be called as medium unit.

- Also, earlier, only investment was used to define MSMEs. With the changed definition, both investment and turnover is used to define MSMEs. Under the new definition a firm with turnover of Rs. 5 crore is to be called a micro unit, of Rs. 50 crore will be called as small unit and turn over greater than Rs. 100 crore is to be called as Medium unit.
- It is to be noted that for an enterprise to come under the category of MSME it has to fulfil both investment and turn over conditions.

5. Global Tenders

Global tenders will be disallowed in government procurement for tenders up to Rs 200 crores. This is because majority of MSME were unable to supply large companies.

6. e-Market

The e-Market linkages are to be strengthened. MSMEs have to search online ways to promote their products.

EPF

Till now, under Employment Provident Fund scheme, 12% is contributed by the employee and 12% by the employer. Now, to increase take home salary, for those not covered under earlier, Statutory PF contribution reduced from 12% to 10%.

NBFC

In order to help the struggling Non-Banking Financial Corporations, Rs. 30,000 crore liquidity is being injected. This will help NBFCs serve the MSMEs better.

Discoms

The Discoms are highly affected due to COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, liquidity of Rs 90,000 crore is to be injected.

Contractors

The contracts under transport, Railway sectors, etc. will be instructed to extend by 6 months.

Real Estate Projects

The pending projects shall be extended till 6 months. Also, registration dates shall be extended by 6 months.

Taxation

- TDS (Tax deducted at source) and TCS ((Tax collected at source)) rates are to be reduced by 25%. This will last till March 2021. This will help in retaining Rs 50,000 crore within the hands of the people.
- All pending refunds to non-corporate business, trusts, proprietorships, are to be done immediately.
- The due date of Income Tax Returns (ITR) is to be extended to 30 November 2020.
- The deadline of Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme is postponed to 31st December 2020.

PDS

Through Public Distribution System (PDS), free food grains are to be supplied to migrant workers. The non-card holders will also receive 5 kg of wheat or rice per month and 1 kg of pulses per month.

MUDRA Loans

The Government is to provide interest subvention of 2% for MUDRA Shishu loans for a period of 12 months.

Street Vendors

The Government will launch a special credit facility to the street vendors within a month. The initial working capital for the street vendors has been fixed as Rs 10,000.

KISAN Credit Cards

Through KISAN Credit Cards, around Rs. 2 lakh crores are being allocated as concessional credit to farmers.

MGNREGA

Govt. has been helping the migrant workers through MGNREGA scheme as well. The number of workers enrolled in May 2020 under the scheme is 40% to 50% more than that joined in May 2019.

14th May 2020

Global Nutrition Report, 2020

- World Health Organization (WHO) has released Global Nutrition Report, 2020. The report asks governments to focus on malnutrition as COVID-19 is threatening food systems and health.
- The Global Nutrition Report was conceived during the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit that was held in 2013.

- **Highlights regarding India**

- According to the report, India is one among the 88 countries that are to miss global nutrition targets set for the year 2025.
- India also has highest rates of domestic inequalities, especially in malnutrition. Along with Nigeria and Indonesia, India was declared the least performing in case of disparities in stunting.
- The report says that India is to miss the target on all four nutritional indicators, which are anaemia among women in reproductive age, stunting among children under age of five, exclusive breast feeding and childhood overweight.
- Around 9% of under-5 children in India are stunted and 20.8% are wasted. At least 21.6% of Indian women and 17.8% of Indian men were anaemic.

Global Energy Transition Index

- The World Economic Forum has released Global Energy Transition (GET) Index. In the report named 'WEF Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2020 report', the index has been framed based on the current performance of the energy systems of the countries, environmental sustainability, energy security and also based on indicators such as readiness for transition to sustainable, secure, affordable and inclusive energy systems.
- Out of 115 countries, India has moved up to 74th rank showing improvements in key parameters such as energy security, growth and environmental sustainability.
- According to the ranking, India and China were the emerging centres of demand in the world.
- Sweden has topped the ranking for the third consecutive year. It was followed by Switzerland and Finland. The United States stood at 32nd rank, Canada at 28th, Brazil at 47th and Australia at 36th rank.