

Top Current Affairs of the Week (23- 29 March 2020)

1. Hamid Ansari releases "My Encounters in Parliament" book

- Former Vice-President '**Hamid Ansari**' has launched Bhalchandra Mungekar's book "My Encounters in Parliament".
- The book has been written by Bhalchandra Mungekar, Indian economist, Social worker and a former Rajya Sabha member.

2. World Meteorological day being observed today

- **World Meteorological Day** is being observed today to highlight the contribution of Meteorological and Hydrological Services for the safety and wellbeing of the global community.
- This year theme of the Day is 'Water and Climate Change' to focus on tackling water-related challenges emerging due to climate change.

3. India celebrates "Shaheed Diwas" on 23 March

- India celebrates "**Shaheed Diwas**" every year on **23rd March** to pay tribute to martyrs **Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru**.
- This day has a very important significance in the Indian freedom struggle.
- On 23 March 1931, three Indian freedom fighters namely Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru were hanged by the British rulers in Lahore jail.

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4. 'Wonderchicken': oldest fossil of modern bird discovered

- The oldest fossil of a modern bird "wonder chicken" dating from the age of dinosaurs, has been discovered.
- It includes a nearly complete skull hidden inside nondescript pieces of rock and dates to more than 66 million years ago.
- That's less than 1 million years before the asteroid impact that killed off all the large dinosaurs.
- The seagull-size shorebird had features of both ducks and chickens as well as turkeys.

5. Legendary country music singer Kenny Rogers passes away

- Legendary country music singer Kenny Rogers (81-years) has passed away.
- He was best known for global hits such as "Lucille", "Lady", "The Gambler" and "Islands in the Stream",
- He was elected to the USA's Music Hall of Fame in 2013.
- In a career spanning six decades, Rogers won three Grammys and six CMA Awards.

6. UP government announces Rs. 1,000 financial aid to 35 lakh labourers

- **UP government** has announced that around 35 lakh labourers in the state will get Rs. 1,000 each as financial aid while free ration for one month will be provided to 1.65 crore construction workers amid the coronavirus outbreak.
- CM **Y Adityanath** directed officials to release of payment to MGNREGA workers in the state and to make food grains available to the poor in cities and villages.
- This payment will be sent directly to their accounts through direct bank transfers.

7. Shivraj Singh Chouhan takes oath as Madhya Pradesh CM

- BJP leader **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** took oath as the **Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh** for the fourth time.
- Governor **Lalji Tandon** administered the oath in the presence of select BJP functionaries, MLAs and top bureaucrats.

8. World Tuberculosis Day: 24 March

- **World Tuberculosis (TB) Day** commemorated each year on **March 24** to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB.
- The theme of World TB Day 2020 - '**It's time**'.
- March 24 marks the day in 1882 when **Dr Robert Koch** discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.

9. Abel Prize 2020 Awarded to two Mathematicians

- Mathematicians **Hillel Furstenberg** (Israel) and **American Gregory Margulis** (Russia) who used randomness to cast new light on the certainties of mathematics will share the **2020 Abel Prize**, one of the field's most prestigious awards.

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters **has decided to award** “for pioneering the use of methods from probability and dynamics in group theory, number theory and combinatorics.”

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10. Satyarup Siddhanta becomes first Indian to complete volcanic Seven Summit

- Indian mountaineer **Satyarup Siddhanta** entered '**Limca Book of Records**' (LBR) as the first Indian to climb the highest volcanoes of all the 7 continents.
- He also holds the record as the youngest mountaineer in the world to climb both 7 peaks and 7 volcanic summits
- He also holds **Guinness Book of World Records, Asia book of records, India book of Records, Champion Book of Records, British Book of Records** etc.

11. Rajya Sabha Election postponed

- Election Commission has deferred **Rajya Sabha elections** scheduled to be held on **26th March** due to COVID -19 outbreak.
- The election to fill up **55 seats in the Upper House** out of which 37 candidates have already been elected unopposed. Now, election was to be held for remaining 18 seats.
- Fresh date of poll and counting for the biennial elections will be announced soon after the situation becomes normal.

12. UK confirmed as first co-chair of India-led climate change initiative

- The **United Kingdom** has been confirmed as the first co-chair of the Governing Council of **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**.
- It is an India-led global climate initiative which was announced by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019

13. First 'Made in India' COVID-19 test kit gets approval

- First **Made in India** Test Kit to diagnose COVID-19 has got the commercial approval by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)**.
- It would cost nearly one-fourth of the current procurement cost and is faster as it screens and detects the infection within 2.5 hours as compared with over 7 hours.
- Pune-based molecular diagnostics company **Mylab** Discovery Solutions Pvt Ltd has developed this test kit.

14. Gujarat Police first in India to introduce taser guns

- The Gujarat Police became the 1st in India to be equipped with **taser guns** as a part of their modernization drive to ensure public safety and security,
- It is an alternative between **"ineffective lathis"** and **"deadly guns"**.
- It is introduced after inspiration from UK Metropolitan Police, the Los Angeles Police Department and the New York Police Department, amid others.

15. Tokyo Olympics postponed to 2021

- Japan's Prime Minister and the head of the International Olympic Committee **Shinzo Abe** agreed to postpone the **Tokyo 2020 Games** by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Olympic Games and Paralympic Games will continue to be called the **"Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020"** and is expected to occur till summer 2021.

16. Author Ruchika Tomar wins PEN/Hemingway Award 2020

- Indian-origin American author **Ruchika Tomar** is named as the winner of the annual **PEN/Hemingway Award 2020** for her 1st novel (debut) **"A Prayer for Travelers"**.
- It states about the friendship of 2 women which grows complicated until the relationship breaks apart, and one of the friends disappears.
- The award includes a prize of USD 25,000 & also a 1-month residency fellowship worth USD 10,000.

17. Saudi Arabia to convene "Extraordinary virtual G20 Leaders' Summit"

- Saudi Arabia has proposed to convene an “**Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders’ Summit**” on **26th March** to advance a coordinated response to the **COVID-19** pandemic.
- **King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud** will chair this meeting.
- It will be joined by different nation’s leaders and international organizations.
- G20 is one of the major forum for international cooperation on financial and economic issues and a primary platform for global economic governance.

18. Scientist of ARI developed biofortified, high protein wheat variety

- Scientists from **Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune** has developed a biofortified durum wheat variety **MACS 4028**, which shows high protein content.
- It is a semi-dwarf variety with superior and stable yielding ability.
- It is resistant to stem rust, leaf rust, foliar aphids, root aphids, and brown wheat mite.
- This is also included by **Krishi Vigyan Kendra programme** for UNICEF to alleviate malnutrition and will boost the Vision 2022 “**Kuposhan Mukh Bharat**”.

19. EC allows use of indelible ink stamp for home quarantine

- **Election Commission** has decided to allow usage of indelible ink on persons for stamping for home quarantine by health authorities in view of **COVID-19**.
- Concerned authorities will be instructed not to use the **Indelible Ink** on any finger on left hand of any persons and will have to maintain a record for the same.
- **Health Ministry** may standardize the mark and the location on the body so that it does not come in the way of conducting elections.

20. “Native Fury” conducted by US & UAE troops

- **US Marines** and **UAE Emirati forces** conducted the biennial exercise, named ‘**Native Fury**’ at **Abu Dhabi**.
- The exercise saw 4,000 U.S. troops from the Army, Marines and Navy position armoured vehicles and other equipment from Kuwait and the island of Diego Garcia in al-Hamra using a portable pier system.

21. E-passes to be issued for essential services associated persons

- **E-passes** will be issued to those associated with essential services, such as vegetable-vendors, grocers and milk-sellers, to ensure smooth supply of items of daily use in the national capital during the 21 days national lockdown.
- Helpline number would be issued for the e-passes.

22. COVID-19 self-screening bot ‘Clara’ to be introduced

- The **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** has introduced an AI bot called ‘**Clara**’ to help people assess potential symptoms of **COVID-19**.
- The CDC has partnered up with CDC Foundation and Microsoft Azure’s Healthcare Bot service to create Clara, the “**coronavirus self-checker**” as it is currently only available in the US on the CDC website.
- It can quickly assess the symptoms and risk factors of Corona.

23. FM announces Rs 1.7 lakh crore relief scheme for poor

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman announced Rs. 1.7 lakh crore relief package under **Prime Minister Gareeb Kalyan Yojana** (food scheme) which will benefit 80 crore people.
- It will include direct cash transfer as well as food security to the poor's for 3 month's to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus.
- **Medical insurance cover** of Rs 50 lakhs for health workers and other similar benefits have been announced to help every section of the society.

24. RBI reduces repo rate by 75 basis points to 4.4%: Key points

- RBI released **7th bi-monthly policy statement 2019-20** cutting the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 75 basis points to **4.40% from 5.15%**.
- **Marginal standing facility (MSF)** rate and the **Bank Rate** are reduced to **4.65%** from 5.40%.
- **CRR** is reduced to 3% from 4%.
- Several measures to inject ₹3.74 lakh crore liquidity into the system has been announced by the Monetary Policy Committee to fight the epidemic.

25. Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit held

- An **Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit** was convened to discuss the challenges posed by the outbreak of the **COVID-19** pandemic and to forge a global coordinated response.
- It was a culmination of the **Finance Ministers** and **Central Bank Governors** and **G20 Sherpas** Meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- G20 Leaders supported strengthening of the WHO's mandate against pandemics, including delivery of **medical supplies, diagnostic tools, treatments, medicines** and **vaccines**.

26. MHA issued SOPs for essential goods supply

- **Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA)** issued **Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs)** for maintaining supply of essential goods in order to relieve hardships faced by people during **21-day nationwide lockdown** to fight the Coronavirus outbreak.
- The **SOPs** prescribe that employees or persons engaged in the supply will through e-pass.
- Facilities engaged in supply of essential goods would carry out regular health and sanitation check-up of employees engaged with treatment.

27. DST sets up COVID-19 Task Force for plotting technologies

- **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** has set up a **COVID-19 Task Force** for mapping of technologies from R & D labs, academic institutions, start-ups and MSME.
- It also aims at funding diagnostics, testing, health care delivery solutions and equipment supplies like **masks, sanitizers, affordable kits for screening, ventilators and oxygenators**.
- The task force will consist of **DST, DBT, ICMR, and MeitY** and will identify start-ups that can fulfill this project.

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28. Veteran artist Satish Gujral passes away

- The renowned artist, painter, sculptor and writer **Satish Gujral** (94 years) passed away.
- He was awarded the **Padma Vibhushan**, the second-highest civilian award of India, in 1999.

29. India proposes shared electronic platform for SAARC nation

- Senior health professionals representing India at **SAARC** proposed a **shared electronic platform** for all member nations.
- It will serve as a **multipurpose vehicle** to discuss and conduct activities such as **online training for emergency response personnel**, knowledge partnerships, sharing of expertise in disease surveillance and **joint research for new diagnostic and therapeutic interventions for epidemic diseases**.

30. Moody's slashes India GDP growth to 2.5% in 2020.

- **Moody's Investors Service** slashed its estimate of India's GDP growth during 2020 calendar year to **2.5% to 5.3%**.
- Moody's estimated the contraction of the global economy in 2020, followed by a pickup in 2021.
- The real GDP in the global economy will contract by 0.5 per cent in 2020, followed by a pickup to **3.2 per cent** in 2021.

Sports

31. ULA's Atlas 5 launches AEHF-6 communications satellite

- A United Launch Alliance Atlas 5 rocket lifted off carrying a USD 1.4 billion Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF-6) communications satellite for the U.S. Space Force in Florida.
- This was the sixth and final satellite of the AEHF constellation that provides secure, jam-proof voice and data communications for U.S. national leadership, military forces.
- It has international partners like Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Australia.

32. Abbott launches 5-minute Covid-19 test

- American medical devices and health care company, **Abbott** Laboratories is unveiling a coronavirus test that can tell if someone is infected in as little as 5 minutes.
- The medical-device maker plans to supply **50,000 tests** a day starting **April 1**.
- The technology builds on Illinois-based Abbotts ID Now platform, the most common point-of-care test currently available in the U.S., with more than 18,000 units spread across the country.

33. Indian Army starts 'Operation Namaste' to combat COVID-19

- According to Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane, Indian Army has launched Operation 'Namaste' to insulate the 1.3 million strong force from coronavirus infection.
- Under 'Operation Namaste', the Army has issued a series of directives to all its bases to insulate the force from the coronavirus.
- The army has set up a total of eight quarantine centres to fight the coronavirus in the country.

34. SBI to cut repo rate by 75 basis points

- State Bank of India has decided to pass on the entire 75 basis points repo rate cut announced by the Reserve Bank of India.
- The new rates, to be effective from 1st of April
- It will be applicable for its borrowers availing loans based on External Benchmark-linked lending rate, EBR and Repo-Linked Lending Rate(RLLR)

- Equated-monthly instalments on eligible home loan accounts, linked to EBR or RLLR will get cheaper by around 52 rupees per one lakh rupees on a 30-year loan

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