



## News Analysis (22 Apr, 2020)

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## Oil Prices Below Zero

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### Why in News

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Recently, the prices of **West Texas Intermediate (WTI)**, the **best quality of crude oil** in the world, **fell to minus \$40.32 a barrel** in interlay trade in **New York (the USA)**.

- It means that the seller of crude oil would be paying the buyer \$40 for each barrel that is bought.
- It is the **lowest crude oil price ever recorded** below the zero mark while the **previous lowest** was recorded **immediately after World War II (WWII)**.

### Oil Pricing

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- Generally the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** used to **work as a cartel and fix prices** in a favourable band.
  - OPEC is **led by Saudi Arabia**, which is the **largest exporter of crude oil in the world (single-handedly exporting 10% of the global demand)**.
  - It could bring down prices by increasing oil production and raise prices by cutting production.
- The global oil pricing mainly **depends upon the partnership between the global oil exporters** instead of well-functioning competition.
- **Cutting oil production** or **completely shutting down** an oil well is a difficult decision, because **restarting** it is immensely **costly and complicated**.
  - Moreover, if a country cuts production, it **risks losing market share** if other countries do not follow the suit.
- Recently, OPEC has been working with **Russia, as OPEC+** to fix the global prices and supply.

### Reasons for Price Fall

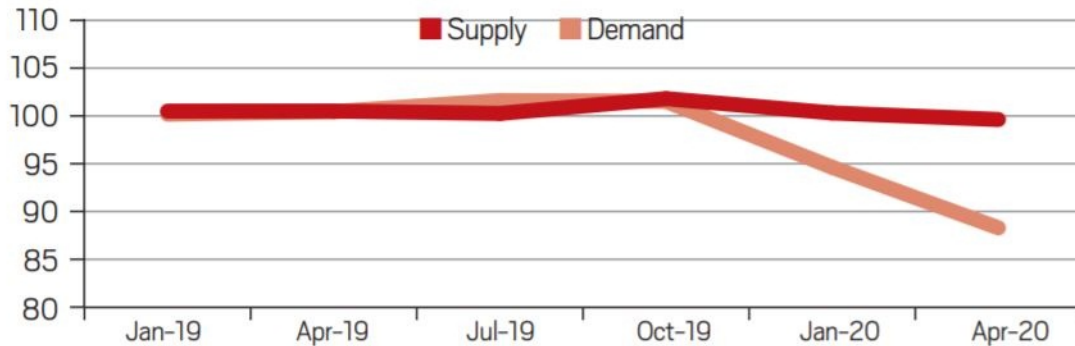
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Crude oil prices were **already falling before the global lockdown** due to the **higher supply and lower demand**.

They were close to \$60 a barrel at the start of 2020 and, by March-end, they were closer to \$20 a barrel.

## TOO MUCH SUPPLY, FALLING PRICES

Chart 1: Liquid fuels produced and consumed worldwide  
(in million barrels per day)



- Problems arose when **Saudi Arabia and Russia disagreed over the production cuts**, required to keep prices stable.
  - Consequently, Saudi Arabia led oil-exporting countries started **undercutting each other on price** while **producing the same quantities of oil**.
  - This strategy was **unsustainable** on its own and the global spread of **Covid-19 made it even worse** as it sharply **reduced the economic activity** and the **oil-demand**.
- Oil-exporting countries decided to **cut production by 10 million barrels a day** (the **highest production cuts**) and yet the demand for oil was reducing even further.  
This **supply demand mismatch** resulted in **exhausted storage capacities**.
- It is important to highlight that the **US** became the **largest producer of crude oil in 2018** and the current US President has been pushing for **higher oil prices** instead of making efforts for lower prices like the previous US Presidents.

- The oil prices started falling steeply because the **May contracts for WTI were due to expire on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2020** which posed **huge challenges** for both the **oil producers** and the **consumers (contractors/buyers)**.
  - **Producers:** They started selling the oil at unbelievably low prices because **shutting production would have been costlier to restart when compared to the marginal loss on May sales.**
  - **Consumers:** They were facing the **problem of storage.** There is no space to store the oil even if they decided to buy and take the delivery.
 

**Accepting the oil delivery, paying for the transportation and storage would have been costlier than the hit on contract price.**
  - In the short term, for both the holders of the delivery contract and the oil producers, it was less costly to pay \$40 a barrel and get rid of the oil instead of storing it (consumers/buyers) or stopping production (producers). So this led to the **negative WTI oil contract prices.**

## Future of Oil Prices

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- It was the **WTI price for May in the US markets** that went **so low.** Crude oil prices at **other places fell but not too much.**
- Prices for **June and the coming months** are pegged **between \$20 and \$35 a barrel.**
- **Investment budgets of exploration and production companies** are **expected to drop** because of the **low shale oil prices.**
- Normally, this should force oil exporting countries to **cut back production and negate the excess supply, restoring balance** in the oil markets but the possibility of recent events from happening again cannot be ruled out.
- Eventually, it would be the **demand-supply mismatch** (adjusted for how much can be stored away) that will **decide the fate of oil prices.**

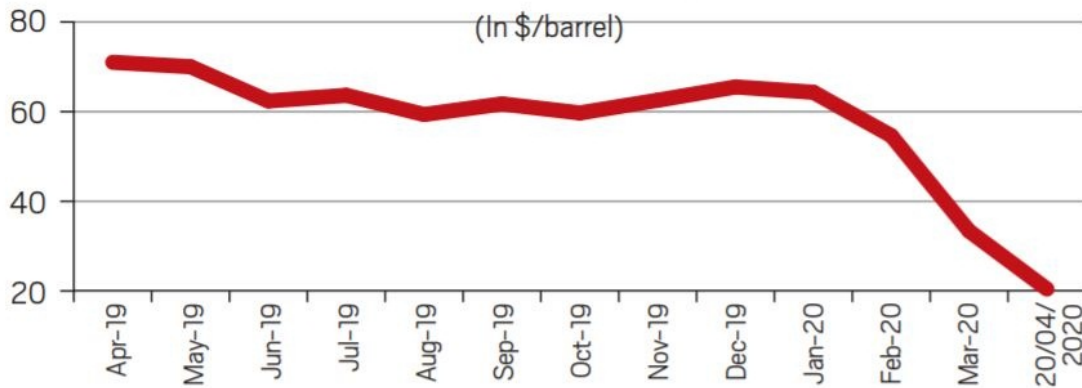
## Impact on India

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- There is **no direct impact** on India because Indian crude oil basket does not comprise WTI and it **only has Brent and oil from some of the Gulf countries.**

However, the **weakness in WTI reflects on the falling prices** of Indian basket as well because **oil is traded globally** and has **indirect impacts.**
- The lower price can be **beneficial for India in two ways:**
  - **For Individuals:** If the government passes on the **lower prices to consumers,** then **individual consumption will be boosted** whenever the **economic recovery** starts in India.
  - **For Governments:** If both, central and the state, governments decide to **levy higher taxes** on oil, it can **boost government revenues.**

## Monthly average price of crude imported by India



## Difference between Brent and WTI

- **Brent crude oil** originates from oil fields in the **North Sea** between the Shetland Islands and Norway, while **West Texas Intermediate (WTI)** is sourced from **US oil fields**, primarily in Texas, Louisiana, and North Dakota.
- **WTI with a lower sulphur content (0.24%)** than **Brent (0.37%)**, is considered "**sweeter**".
- Both oils are **relatively light**, but Brent has a slightly higher API gravity, making WTI the lighter of the two.

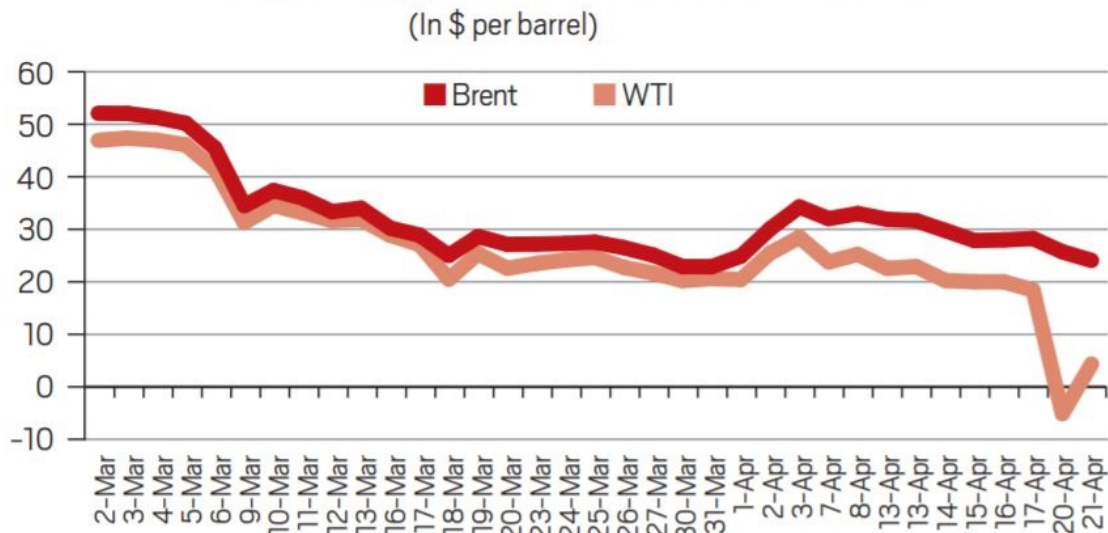
**American Petroleum Institute (API) gravity** is an indicator of the density of crude oil or refined products.

- **Brent crude price** is the international benchmark price used by the **OPEC** while **WTI crude price** is a benchmark for **US oil prices**.

Since **India imports primarily from OPEC** countries, Brent is the benchmark for oil prices in India.

- **Cost of shipping for Brent** crude is typically **lower**, since it is **produced near the sea** and it can be put on ships immediately. Shipping of WTI is priced higher since it is produced in landlocked areas like Cushing, Oklahoma where the storage facilities are limited.

## Daily closing price of Brent and WTI crude oil



## Human Activities Responsible for Zoonoses

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### Why in News

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According to the **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**, **60% of human infectious diseases originate from animals.**

### Key Points

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- **Zoonoses**
  - It is the name given to **diseases transmitted from animals to humans.**
  - It is **based on the Greek words** for “animal” and “sickness”.
  - **Examples: Rabies** (rabid dogs), **Ebola** (fruit bats), West Nile virus (infected mosquitoes), the **Zika virus** (infected Aedes species mosquito)–and the most recent - the novel coronavirus **Covid-19 (bat/pangolin).**
- **Data Related to Zoonoses**
  - On an average, **one new infectious disease emerges in humans every four months.**
    - A study by American researchers that was completed before the new coronavirus outbreak identifies **rodents, primates and bats as hosts of three-quarters of viruses transmitted to humans.**
    - **Domestic animals** also carry about **50% of the zoonoses** identified.
  - In 2016, the UNEP pointed out that **75% of all emerging infectious diseases** (such as Ebola, HIV, avian flu, Zika, or SARS) in humans are zoonotic (pertaining to zoonoses).
  - According to it, these zoonotic diseases are **closely interlinked with the health of ecosystems.**
  - **Deaths due to Zoonoses:** Beyond the current outbreak of coronavirus, the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)** estimates that zoonoses **kill some 700,000 people a year.**
- **Changed Ecosystems**
  - Zoonoses are opportunistic and thrive where there are changes in the **environment**, changes in **animal or human populations** that serve as hosts for certain pathogens, or **changes in the pathogen** (disease causing microorganisms), itself.
  - In the last century, a combination of **population growth and reduction in ecosystems and biodiversity** has culminated in unprecedented opportunities for pathogens to pass between animals and people.

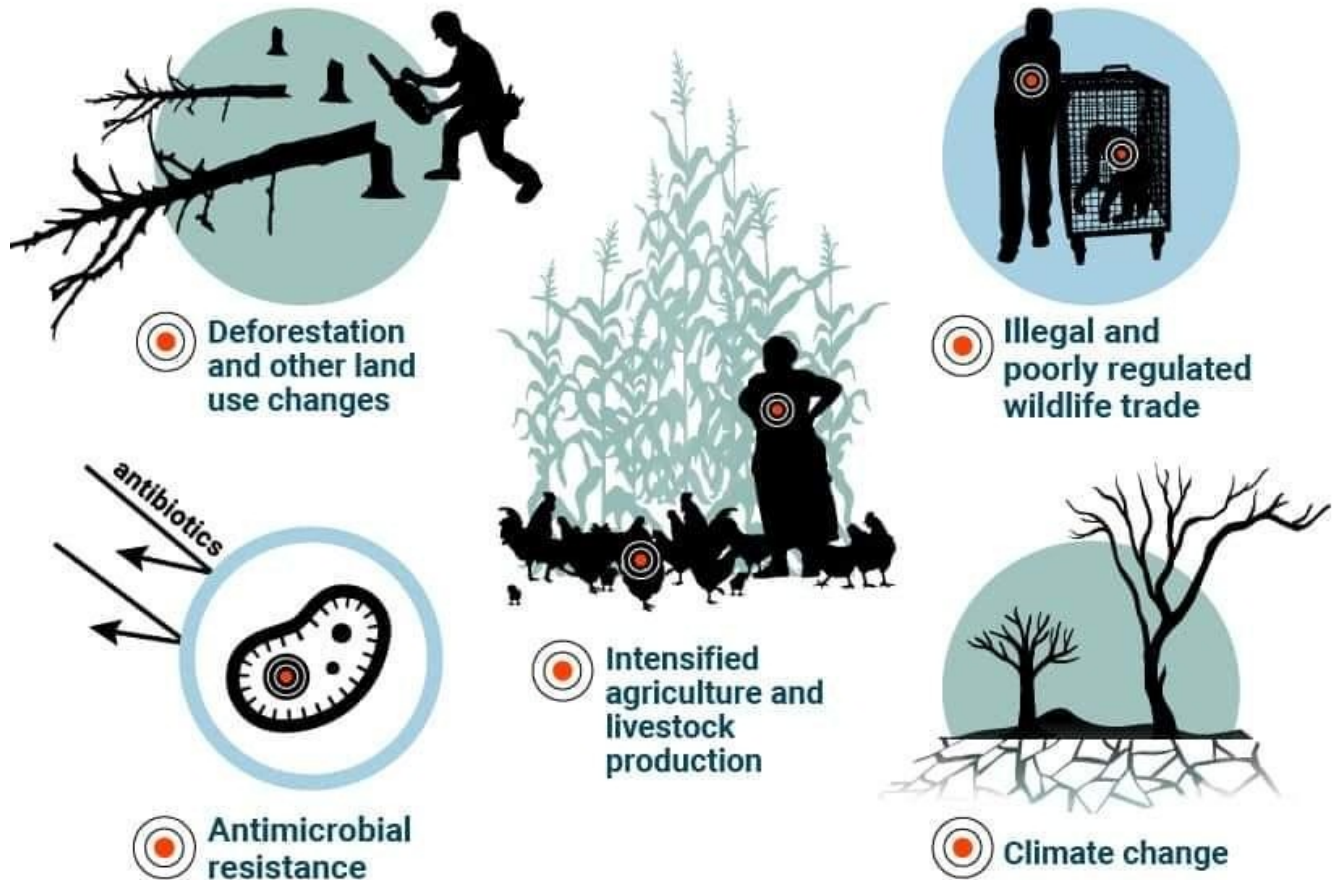
- **Humans-led Changes in the Environment**
  - **By altering land use**–for settlement, agriculture, logging, extractive or other industries and their associated infrastructure–humans fragment and encroach into animal habitats.
  - **Destruction of natural buffer zones** that would normally separate humans from animals, thus creating opportunities for pathogens to spill over from wild animals to people.
  - **Climate change**– primarily the result of greenhouse gas emissions–exacerbates the situation. Changes in temperature, humidity and seasonality directly **affect the survival of microbes in the environment.**
  - **Proximity to different species** through wet markets (live animal market) or consumption of wild animals can also facilitate animal to human transmission.
  - **Resistance to Drugs:** One example of this is the emerging resistance of pathogens to antimicrobial drugs–such as antibiotics, antifungals, antiretrovirals and antimalarials–often resulting from the misuse of the drugs, either by people or in veterinary medicine.
  - **Domesticated animals** are often a “bridge” between pathogens from the wild and humans.
- **Global Action**
  - UNEP, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and hundreds of partners across the planet have launched a 10-year effort to prevent, halt and **reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide.**
  - **Known as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030,** this globally-coordinated response to the loss and degradation of habitats will focus on building political will and capacity to restore humankind’s relation with nature.
- **Suggestions**
  - **Addressing** zoonotic disease emergence requires addressing its root cause–primarily, the **impact of human activities on ecosystems.**

Ecosystems are inherently resilient and adaptable and, by supporting diverse species, they help to regulate diseases. The **more biodiverse an ecosystem is, the more difficult** it is for one pathogen to spread rapidly or dominate.
  - There is a need to recognise the close relationships between human, animal and environmental health. It calls for collaborative, multisectoral, transdisciplinary and international efforts, as encapsulated by the **One Health approach**. At last, a **strong will** is necessary.

### **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

- IPBES is an **independent intergovernmental body** established to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.
- It was **established in Panama City (US)**, in April 2012.
- It is **not a United Nations body.**

# What factors are increasing zoonosis emergence? (Diseases transmitted from animals to humans)



#COVID19

UN   
environment  
programme

Source: TH

Food Crisis Amid Covid-19

Why in News

According to the **United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP)**, the **number of people** facing **acute food insecurity** could nearly **double to 265 million in 2020** due to the **economic fallout of Covid-19**.

**Acute food insecurity** is any **manifestation of food insecurity at a specific point in time of a severity** that threatens lives, livelihoods or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration.

## Key Points

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- **Global Report on Food Crisis 2020**
  - This report was highlighted to show **links between conflict and rising levels of acute food insecurity**.
  - **135 million people** in 55 countries experienced acute food insecurity in **2019** nearly 60% of whom **lived in conflict or instability**.
  - **Yemen will see the world's worst food and malnutrition crisis in 2020** as the number of acutely food-insecure people there is "expected to exceed 17 million".
  - The report is produced by the **Global Network against Food Crises**, an international alliance working to address the root causes of extreme hunger.
- **Covid-19 Effect**
  - An **additional 130 million** are on the edge of starvation prompted by Coronavirus. Added with 135 million, the number rises to 265 million in 2020.
  - **Reasons:** The impact of **lost tourism revenues, falling remittances, unemployment, under-employment, shutdown of many factories and travel and other restrictions** linked to the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Suggestions**
  - Swift and unimpeded humanitarian access to vulnerable communities.
  - To set up a network of logistics hubs to keep worldwide humanitarian supply chains moving.
  - Strengthening food security systems.

## UN World Food Programme

- World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
- The WFP was **established in 1963** by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and the United Nations General Assembly.

## India's Step in Ensuring Food Security

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- The Union Agriculture Minister participated in an Extraordinary virtual meeting of **G-20** Agriculture Ministers to address the issue of Covid-19 impacts on food security, safety and nutrition.
  - The G-20 Agriculture Ministers virtual meeting was **organized** through video conferencing **by the Saudi Presidency**.
  - The G-20 nations resolved to have **international cooperation** in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, to avoid food wastages and losses, **maintain the continuity of the food supply value chain** across borders.
  - They also resolved to work together for food security and nutrition, share best practices and lessons learnt, promote research, responsible investments, innovations and reforms that will improve the sustainability and resilience of agriculture and food systems.
  - Agreed **to develop science based international guidelines on stricter safety and hygienic measures for zoonosis control**.
- The **Government of India has exempted all agriculture operations during the lockdown period** and ensured continued availability of essential agriculture produce and supply, while adhering to protocol of social distancing, health and hygiene.

**Source: PIB**

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## Woes of Migrants Amid Covid-19

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### Why in News

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The **Covid-19** pandemic and the imposition of **lockdown** in order to curb it has brought the **perils of migrant workers** into the light.

### Challenges

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- Most of the migrant workers are **not routed through licensed contractors** so a huge number is excluded from getting any benefit out of the **Inter-State Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act, 1979**.
  - According to ISMW Act, an **inter-State migrant worker is any person who is recruited by or through a licensed contractor**.
    - The ISMW Act was drawn up after **repealing the Orissa Dadan Labour Act, 1975**.
- The Act is **only applicable** to any **establishment which has five or more inter-State migrant workers as employees** which again leaves a significant number of workers.
  - In reality, a **small proportion** of migrant workmen are **placed under such establishments**.
  - Migrants from establishments with less than five migrant employees also cease to be migrants, legally.
- The ISMW Act is also **not legally enforceable**.

- **Coronavirus** crisis has exposed the **inadequacy of the ISMW Act** highlighting needs for legal safeguards and welfare measures for migrants.

## Suggestions

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- **Repealing of the ISMW Act, 1979 and replacing** it with a new Act, or by **enlarging the scope of Unorganised Workers' Social Security (UWSS) Act, 2008** to include legal entitlements, to define the migrant workman as a subset, to provide for contingencies of livelihood loss and to make the Act legally enforceable.
- **Universalisation of registration** and issuance of **Aadhaar-based Unique Worker's Identification Number (UWIN)**.
- Schemes like **MGNREGA, Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) and Ujjwala** need to be **made portable and extensive**.
- **Geofencing** of different benefits enabling a migrant worker to choose location-wise benefits.
- Preparing a **comprehensive database of the migrant workers'** source and destination, demography, employment patterns and skill sets.  
It will help in skill development, providing social security benefits, planning for mass transit of migrant labour and preparing for any contingency plan in emergency situations.
- **Empowering the Inter-State Council**, set up under **Article 263 of the Constitution** to effectively and comprehensively deal with larger issues related to migrant workers.  
Migrant worker issues have **complex Centre-State and inter-State dimensions**.

## Steps Taken by Government

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- **The UWSS Act, 2008:** It provides for **social security and welfare of unorganised workers**.
  - The UWSS Act defines **unorganised workers as home-based worker, self-employed worker or wage worker in the unorganised sector**.
  - It has **two features**:
    - Registration of unorganised workers.
    - Portable smart I-card with a **UWIN**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana:** To ensure **old age protection** for unorganised workers.
- **Atal Pension Yojana:** It is a **social security scheme** launched under the **National Pension System (NPS)** and **aims at providing a steady stream of income** after the **age of 60** to all citizens of India including the migrants and labourers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana** and **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana** (under the **Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**): Both of the schemes provide for **life insurance** and **accident insurance respectively** to the migrants and labourers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (Ayushman Bharat):** It aims at **providing health cover** to protect the migrants among others against the financial risk arising out of catastrophic health episodes.

## Mitigate Risks in Waste Disposal: NGT

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has directed all States and Union Territories to take adequate steps to mitigate risks in disposal of bio-medical waste in view of the **Covid-19** pandemic.

### Key Points

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- **Unauthorised Healthcare Facilities:** The NGT raised concerns regarding unscientific disposal of bio-medical waste by unauthorised healthcare facilities. **Only 1.1 lakh** out of **2.7 lakh healthcare facilities** are **authorised** under the **Bio-medical Waste Management Rules, 2016** so far.
  - The NGT asked the State Pollution Control Boards and pollution control committees to make efforts to bridge this gap to mitigate the risk in terms of unscientific disposal of bio-medical waste.
- Earlier, the **Karnataka High Court has also directed the Karnataka Government** to take special measures **to protect sanitation workers** while they collect waste from houses where persons subjected to **home quarantine** reside.
- The court directed that:
  - Waste from households under quarantine should be put in **yellow non-chlorinated plastic bags**, and be **treated as biomedical waste**.
  - Waste should be picked up from quarantine homes in a separate vehicle.
  - Sanitation workers and vehicle drivers should be provided with the necessary safety gear, such as gloves, goggles and gowns.
- Once collected, these waste must be disposed of, as per the **Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016**.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change notified the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules in 2016.
  - The new set of Rules **replaced the Bio-Medical Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 1998**.

### Highlights of Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016

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- **Definition:** Biomedical waste was defined as **human and animal anatomical waste, treatment apparatus** like needles, syringes and other materials **used in health care facilities** in the process of treatment and research.
  - This waste is generated during diagnosis, treatment or immunisation in hospitals, nursing homes, pathological laboratories, blood bank, etc.

- **Objective:** The objective of the rules is to **properly manage the per day bio-medical waste** from healthcare facilities (HCFs) across the country.
- **Ambit:** The ambit of the rules has been expanded to include vaccination camps, blood donation camps, surgical camps or any other healthcare activity.
- **Phase out:** Use of chlorinated plastic bags, gloves and blood bags to be phased out within two years from March 2016.
- **Pre-treatment:** Pre-treatment of the laboratory waste, microbiological waste, blood samples and blood bags through disinfection or sterilisation on-site in the manner prescribed by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** or by the **National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO)**.
- **Training:** All health care workers to be provided training and immunization regularly.
- **Bar-code:** A Bar-Code System for bags or containers containing bio-medical waste for disposal will be established.
- **Categorisation:** Bio-medical waste has been classified into 4 categories instead of the earlier 10 categories to improve the segregation of waste at source.
- **Stringent standards for pollutants:** The rules prescribe more stringent standards for incinerators to reduce the emission of pollutants in the environment.
- **Land:** The State Government provides the land for setting up common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facilities.
- No establishment of on-site treatment and disposal facility, if a service of `common bio-medical waste treatment facility is available at a distance of seventy-five kilometer.
- Operators of a common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facility have to ensure the timely collection of bio-medical waste from the HCFs and assist the HCFs in conduct of training.

### **National Green Tribunal**

- **NGT** was established in the year **2010** under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**.
- It was **established for**
  - Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
  - Enforcement of any legal right relating to the environment.
  - Giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.
- The Tribunal is guided by **principles of natural justice**.

**Source: TH**

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## Sepsivac to be Tested for Covid-19

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### Why in News

The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** has decided to **test its new drug against Sepsis**, named **Sepsivac** to treat critical patients of **Covid-19**.

The drug **will be tested in 50 Covid-19** patients at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi and Bhopal, and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh.

## Key Points

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- **New Drug Against Sepsis**

- The new drug has **recently been approved for marketing** in India and would be available commercially as Sepsivac® from Ahmedabad-based Cadila Pharmaceuticals Limited.
- The pharmaceutical company was **supported by CSIR laboratories led by Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM)**, Jammu in development of this drug, which has **also** been found **effective for leprosy patients**.

- **Gram Negative Sepsis and Covid-19**

- **Sepsis** is a serious life-threatening condition caused when the body's response to any kind of infection goes out of balance, triggering changes that can lead to **multi-organ failure**.
- **Gram negative bacteremia** (presence of bacteria in the bloodstream) in the critically ill patient is **synonymous with gram negative sepsis**.
  - **Gram-negative bacteria** have built-in abilities to find new ways to be resistant and can pass along genetic materials that allow other bacteria to become drug-resistant as well.
- According to scientists, there are **some clinical similarities between patients suffering from gram-negative Sepsis and Covid-19**.
- A Covid-19 infection **leads to a cytokine storm**, quite **similar to the one seen in Sepsis**, when there is a **heightened immune response** and over production of immune cells because of which the body starts attacking its own cells. There is inflammation and it reduces the lung's capacity to absorb oxygen.

- **Effectiveness of Sepsivac**

- Previous randomised trials in sepsis patients showed **11% absolute reduction and 55.5% relative reduction in mortality**. Sepsivac reduces the days on ventilator, in ICU and hospital and incidence of secondary infection.
- The drug **uses the Mycobacterium w** (formally known as mycobacterium indicus pranii) as it produces a different immune-system response.

The United States and Australia are also going to start testing the efficacy of the **BCG, or tuberculosis vaccine**, that also employs a different strain of mycobacterium, in health care workers at the frontline of treating Covid-19 patients.

- **CSIR's Plan for Mycobacterium w**

CSIR has also planned to **evaluate Mw for faster recovery of hospitalised Covid-19 infected patients** and minimise the spread of disease through them as well for providing **preventive treatment (prophylaxis) to persons coming in contact with Covid-19 infected patients** like family members and health care workers.

## **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research**

- CSIR was established by the Government of India in **September 1942 as an autonomous body.**
- It is known for its cutting edge R&D knowledge base in diverse S&T areas.
- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has been **ranked first in the Nature Ranking Index-2020.**

The Nature Index provides a close to real-time proxy of high-quality research output and collaboration at the institutional, national and regional level.

**Source: TH**

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## Earth Day

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### Why in News

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- Every year, **April 22** is celebrated as **Earth Day** to raise public awareness about the environment and inspire people to save and protect it.
- The year 2020 marks 50 years since the start of this **modern environmental movement in 1970.**
- The theme of Earth Day 2020 is **"Climate Action"**.

### Key Points

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- It was first celebrated in 1970, and is now coordinated globally by the **Earth Day Network** and celebrated in more than 193 countries each year.
- The idea of commemorating such a day was propounded by **Gaylord Nelson**, an American environmentalist and politician.
- The Earth Day also recognizes a **collective responsibility**, as called for in the **1992 Rio Declaration (Earth Summit)**, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity.
- The **Paris Agreement** was also opened for signature on **22 April 2016 – Earth Day – at UN Headquarters in New York.**
- World Earth Day encourages people to take more steps for the protection of nature and to thank mother earth for the rich environment.

## World Earth day 2020: Digital Celebration

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- Google marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Earth Day with a special interactive doodle dedicated to one of the smallest and most critical organisms - **the bees**.
- As people have to stay inside their homes amid **Covid-19 lockdown**, World Earth Day 2020 is all set to be celebrated digitally. People who plan on participating can join '**24 hours of action**'.
- One can also take 22 challenges that include measuring your carbon footprint, doing a plastic audit, skype a scientist, work for the earth, zero waste for one day and consume 1 meal per day this week on a plant-based diet.

### Earth Day Network

- Earth Day Network is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to diversify, educate and activate the environmental movement worldwide.
- EDN main office is located in Washington DC, USA.

### Note

- 22 March: **World Water Day**
- 22 April: Earth Day
- 22 May : **World Biodiversity Day**
- Recently the **Earth Hour** was observed on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. It encourages people to switch off the lights from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm as per their local time.

### Source: TH

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## Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

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### Why In News

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- Recently, many activists, journalists and students have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in different cases across the country.
- UAPA was passed in **1967**. It **aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India**.  
**Unlawful activity** refers to any action taken by an individual or association intended to disrupt the **territorial integrity and sovereignty of India**.
- The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the **Centre deems an activity as unlawful** then it may, **by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so**.
- It has **death penalty and life imprisonment** as highest punishments.
- Under UAPA, **both Indian and foreign nationals** can be charged. It will be applicable to the offenders in the same manner, even if crime is committed on a foreign land, outside India.

- Under the UAPA, the investigating agency can **file a charge sheet in maximum 180 days after the arrests** and the duration can be extended further after intimating the court.
- The **2004 amendment**, added "**terrorist act**" to the list of offences to ban organisations for terrorist activities, under which 34 outfits were banned.
  - Till 2004, "unlawful" activities referred to actions related to secession and cession of territory.
- In August, Parliament cleared the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019 to designate individuals as terrorists** on certain grounds provided in the Act.
  - The Act empowers the **Director General of National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to grant approval of **seizure or attachment of property** when the case is investigated by the said agency.
  - The Act empowers the **officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above**, to **investigate** cases of terrorism in addition to those conducted by the DSP or ACP or above rank officer in the state.

**Source: TH**

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## e-Raktkosh Portal

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Union Health minister urged the use of the **e-Raktkosh portal** as a single point for maintaining real-time information on the **status of stocks of each blood group**.

- The Health Minister has termed the availability of blood in blood banks as '**essential**'.
- In several blood disorders like **thalassemia and haemophilia** regular transfusion of the blood is necessary.

### Key Points

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- **e-Raktkosh portal** is a Centralized Blood Bank Management System.
- **It is a comprehensive IT solution** to standardize and streamline the standard operating procedures, guidelines and workflow of blood banks across the nation.
- It was inaugurated on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016 by then Minister of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)
- It enforces **Drug & Cosmetic Act, National blood policy standards** and guidelines ensuring proper management of blood.



- e-Rakt Kosh has components for management of the blood donation life cycle which includes :
  - The biometric Donor Management System
  - Blood grouping,
  - TTI screening,
  - antibody screening,
  - A centralized Blood Inventory Management System
  - Bio-Medical Waste Management System for disposal of discarded blood

## Blood Disorder

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- A **blood disorder** is any condition that impacts one or more parts of the blood, usually interfering with its ability to work correctly.
- Blood disorder can be categorised as **Common Blood Disorder** like anaemia and **Rare Blood Disorder** like thalassemia.
- **Types of Blood Disorder**
  - **Blood Disorders Affecting Red Blood Cells like** Anemia, Pernicious anemia (B12 deficiency), Aplastic anemia, Autoimmune hemolytic anemia etc.
  - **Blood disorders that affect White Blood Cells like** Lymphoma, Leukemia, Multiple myeloma.
  - **Blood Disorders Affecting Blood Plasma like** hemophilia
  - **Blood Disorders Affecting Platelets like** thrombocytopenia.

## UNGA Resolution on Covid-19

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### Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations General Assembly** has adopted a resolution, calling for global cooperation to ensure '**equitable and fair**' access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment for all nations to battle the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

### Key Points

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- The UNGA resolution which was **drafted by Mexico** was adopted through consensus.

- The resolution:
  - **Prevent any undue stockpiling** of essential medical supplies.
  - **Recognised the importance of international cooperation and effective multilateralism** to ensure that all States have in place effective national protective measures, access to and flow of vital medical supplies, medicines and vaccines.
  - Encourages member states **to work in partnership** with all relevant stakeholders to increase research and development funding for vaccines and medicines.
  - Called to **bolster coordination with the private sector** towards rapid development, manufacturing and distribution of diagnostics, antiviral medicines, personal protective equipment and vaccines, adhering to the objectives of efficacy, safety, equity, accessibility, and affordability.
- Earlier, the United Nations General Assembly had unanimously adopted a resolution, **calling for intensified international cooperation** to defeat the pandemic that is causing severe disruption to societies and economies.

### United Nations General Assembly

- The General Assembly is the **main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.**
- **All 193 Member States** of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the only UN body with universal representation.
- Each year, in **September**, the full UN membership meets in the General Assembly Hall in **New York** for the **annual General Assembly session**, and general debate, which many heads of state attend and address.
- Decisions on important questions, such as those on **peace and security, admission of new members** and budgetary matters, require **a two-thirds majority** of the General Assembly.  
Decisions on other questions are **by simple majority.**
- **The President** of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term of office.

Source: IE

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## CovidIndiaSeva Launched

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### Why in News

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The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has launched the **“CovidIndiaSeva”**, an **interactive platform** to establish a direct channel of communication during the **covid-19 pandemic**.

### Key Points

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- It is a **Twitter Seva solution** where people can raise their queries **@CovidIndiaSeva**, enabling **transparent e-governance**.
- The @CovidIndiaSeva works off a **dashboard at the backend that helps process large volumes of tweets, converts them into resolvable tickets and assigns them to the relevant authority** for real-time resolution.
- **Trained experts** will share **authoritative public health information swiftly** at scale, helping to build a **direct channel for communication** with citizens.
- The dedicated account will be **accessible to people** be it **local** or **national** in their scope.

**Source: TH**

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