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Current affairs summary for prelims

26 February, 2024

G-33 Ministerial Statement on Agriculture Trade Negotiations

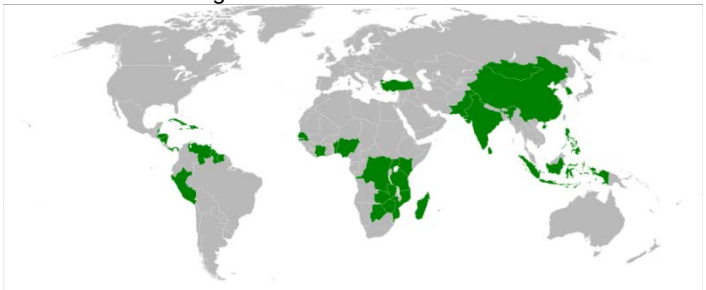
Context: *The G-33 Ministerial Statement on Agriculture Trade Negotiations was delivered at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference G-33 Ministerial Meeting in Abu Dhabi on February 25, 2024.*

➢ **Joint Statement:**

- Acknowledging the shared responsibility of all WTO Members, the G-33 emphasizes the need to address contemporary challenges within the multilateral trading system.
- The G-33 sees the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference as a crucial opportunity to strengthen a rules-based, inclusive, and transparent multilateral trading system centered around the WTO, expressing gratitude to the UAE for hosting the conference.
- Calling upon all WTO Members to engage constructively, the G-33 urges for a substantive outcome on agriculture at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference.
- Expressing deep concern over projected increases in undernourishment and hunger, particularly in Africa, the G-33 highlights the urgency of addressing food security issues.
- Regretting the lack of progress in agriculture trade negotiations, the G-33 emphasizes the importance of making tangible advancements to rebuild trust and credibility within the WTO.
- Recognizing the vital role of public stockholding for food security, especially for developing countries, the G-33 underscores the necessity of addressing this issue.
- The G-33, along with co-sponsoring Members of Proposal JOB/AG/229, calls for concerted efforts towards adopting a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes.
- Affirming developing country Members' right to the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), the G-33 urges for its adoption by the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference.
- The G-33 is open to considering the African Group's submission on the SSM issue and engaging in technical discussions.
- Committing to advancing agriculture trade negotiations in good faith, the G-33 aims to rectify imbalances in the Agreement on Agriculture and address food security challenges of developing countries, including LDCs and NFIDCs.
- Emphasizing the preservation of Special and Differential Treatment for developing country Members and the consideration of non-trade concerns in agriculture trade negotiations, the G-33 underscores the importance of fairness and inclusivity within the WTO framework.

➢ **G33**

- The G33, also known as the Friends of Special Products in agriculture, is a coalition of developing countries formed before the 2003 Cancun ministerial conference. It aims to address agricultural concerns within WTO negotiations, particularly focusing on defensive measures and market access for developing nations.
- Led primarily by India, the group advocates for policies that protect developing countries' agricultural sectors from unfair competition, such as predatory dumping and heavily subsidized agriculture in richer nations.



- One of the key objectives of the G33 is to establish a "special products" exemption, allowing developing countries to shield certain agricultural goods from tariff reductions. This exemption is crucial for safeguarding the interests of vulnerable farming communities and ensuring food security.
- Additionally, the G33 supports the implementation of a "special safeguard mechanism" to counteract sudden import surges that could threaten the stability of domestic agricultural markets. This mechanism would enable developing countries to impose tariffs in response to such disruptions.
- By advocating for these measures, the G33 seeks to empower developing countries to manage their agricultural economies effectively, support rural livelihoods, and promote sustainable development.

Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23

Context: *The per capita monthly household consumption expenditure experienced a more than twofold increase from 2011-12 to 2022-23.*

➢ **Change in Food Spending Over Time:**

- Over the past two decades, the proportion of expenditure allocated to food in India has gradually decreased.
- This decline is evident in both rural and urban areas.
- Rural households spent nearly 59.46% of their consumption expenditure on food in 1999-2000, which reduced to 46.38% in 2022-23.
- Similarly, urban households allocated 48.06% of their expenditure to food in 1999-2000, decreasing to 39.17% in 2022-23.

➢ **Shifts in Food Consumption Patterns:**

- The expenditure on cereals as a percentage of total consumption has notably decreased over the years.
- Rural households spent approximately 22% of their total consumption on cereals in 1999-2000, which decreased to 4.91% in 2022-23.
- Urban households allocated around 12% of their consumption to cereals in 1999-2000, reducing to 3.64% in 2022-23.
- Conversely, spending on high-value and nutritional items like eggs, fish, meat, fruits, and vegetables has increased, especially in rural areas.

➢ **Need for Inflation Basket Review:**

- The current inflation basket may need revision to accurately reflect changing consumption patterns.

Face to Face Centres

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- Rural households' spending on cereals is significantly lower than the weightage assigned to them in the CPI basket.
- Similarly, the share of expenditure on food in both rural and urban households differs from the weightage in the CPI basket.
- The inclusion of items like pan, tobacco, intoxicants, and entertainment in urban CPI may require reconsideration.

➢ **Imputed vs. Non-imputed MPCE Data:**
- The HCE Survey for 2022-23 provides both imputed and non-imputed MPCE data.
- Imputed values include free items received through social welfare programs.
- Rural households at the bottom fractiles show the least increase in expenditure when including imputed values, indicating disparities in benefit distribution.
- Urban households' lowest fractiles demonstrate higher percentage increases in consumption expenditure when including imputed values.

➢ **Regional Disparities in Standard of Living:**
- Variations exist in monthly consumption spending between urban and rural areas across Indian states and union territories.
- States like Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand exhibit significant disparities in rural-urban consumption spending.
- Chandigarh, Sikkim, and Telangana reflect notable differences in urban-rural spending patterns.
- Lakshadweep stands out with negative differences, suggesting lower urban consumption spending compared to rural areas.
- All-India data highlights a substantial difference in consumption spending between urban and rural areas, indicating prevailing disparities in living standards.

➢ **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey**
- **HCES Purpose**: HCES is vital for collecting household spending data crucial for governments, analysts, and researchers.
- **Data Scope**: It covers spending across key areas like food, housing, education, healthcare, and transportation.
- **Insights for Understanding**: HCES provides insights into economic behaviors, living standards, and guides policy formulation for economic progress and poverty reduction.
- **Objectives**: Measures living standards, informs policy development, aids economic analysis, assesses poverty and inequality, and contributes to inflation and cost of living calculations.

Chromosomal Aberrations

Context: *Researchers have documented chromosomal abnormalities identified in prehistoric skeletal remains dating back around 5,500 years.*

➢ **Definition of Chromosomal Aberrations:**
- Chromosomal aberrations involve changes in chromosome structure or number, including deletions, duplications, inversions, and translocations.
- The most common types are aneuploidies, which feature an abnormal number of chromosomes.

➢ **Types of Chromosomal Aberrations:**
- Numerical aberrations (aneuploidies) include monosomies (one chromosome missing) and trisomies (extra chromosome).
- Structural aberrations comprise deletions, duplications, inversions, and translocations.

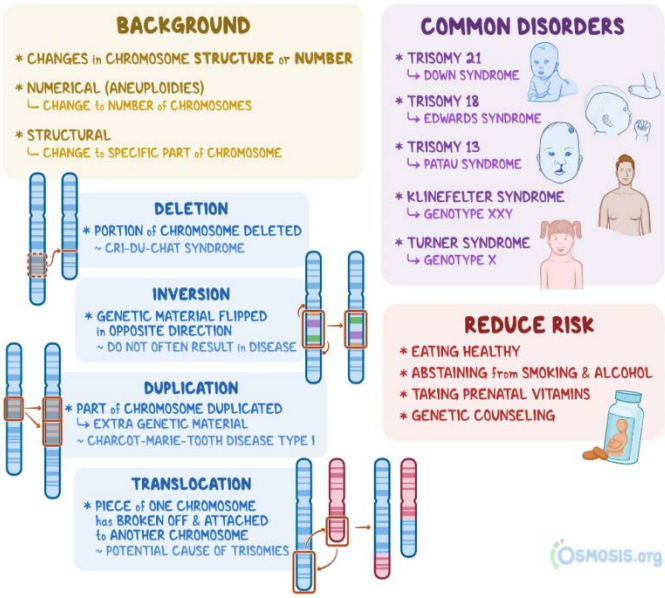
➢ **Common Chromosomal Disorders:**
- Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome), trisomy 18 (Edwards syndrome), and trisomy 13 (Patau syndrome) are prevalent chromosomal disorders.
- Sex chromosome disorders such as Klinefelter syndrome, Turner syndrome, XYY syndrome, and XXX syndrome also occur.

➢ **Causes of Chromosomal Aberrations:**
- Errors during cell division, especially during meiosis, contribute to chromosomal aberrations.
- Risk factors include advanced maternal age and exposure to harmful substances.

➢ **Diagnosis of Chromosomal Aberrations:**
- Prenatal screenings through ultrasound and blood tests aid in identifying chromosomal aberrations.
- Postnatal diagnosis involves techniques like karyotyping and fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH).

➢ **Risk Reduction Strategies:**
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle before and during pregnancy helps reduce the risk of chromosomal aberrations.
- Genetic counselling is recommended for families with a history of chromosomal disorders.

➢ **Key Facts:**
- Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome) stands as the most prevalent chromosomal disorder.
- Chromosomal aberrations typically arise from errors during cell division.
- Early diagnosis allows for informed decision-making and appropriate medical care for affected individuals and families.



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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Attukal Pongala Festival

Recently, during the Attukal Pongala festival in Kerala, thousands of women filled the streets, offering prayers and cooking pots billowed with smoke in honour of the temple deity of the Attukal Bhagavathy temple.

About Attukal Pongala festival:

- Attukal Pongala is a **10-day religious festival** that takes place at the **Attukal Bhagavathy Temple** in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- It is one of the **world's largest gatherings** of women and is known as the **Sabarimala of women**.
- The offering is a **sweet pudding made from rice, jaggery, grated coconut, ghee** and **banana,** traditionally prepared in earthen pots.
- Attukal Bhagavathy is believed to be the **divine incarnation of Kannaki**, the protagonist of the Tamil epic Silappadhikaram.
- The lore is that after destroying Madurai to avenge the injustice done to her husband Kovalan, **Kannaki reached Kerala**, and took rest at Attukal, while on her way to Kodungalloor.

Dwarkadhish Temple

Recently, the Prime Minister of India performed darshan and pooja at Dwarkadhish Temple in Beyt Dwarka, Gujarat.

About Dwarkadhish Temple:

- The Dwarkadhish Temple, **also known as Jagat Mandir** is a **13th century temple** in Dwarka, Gujarat, dedicated to **Lord Krishna**.
- It is located on the banks of the **Gomti River,** at the point where it **meets the Arabian Sea**.
- It is **one of the Char Dham**, (others are Rameshwaram, Badrinath and Puri) which are the four most important Vaishnava temples in India.
- This temple is a **mix of Chalukyan and Solanki styles of architecture.**
- The temple was originally built in **400 BC by Vajranabha**, the great grandson of Lord Krishna.
- It is a five-story limestone structure, **170 feet tall, with 72 pillars.**

Sudarshan Setu

Recently, the Prime Minister of India inaugurated Country's longest cable-stayed bridge, 'Sudarshan Setu' in Gujarat.

About Sudarshan Setu:

- Sudarshan Setu is located in Gujarat, **connecting Okha mainland and Beyt Dwarka island** at Dwarka.
- It is the **longest signature stayed bridge** in the country, spanning approximately 2.32 km.
- Sudarshan Setu is not just a bridge but also hailed as **an engineering marvel** due to its innovative design and construction.
- The bridge **serves as a tourist attraction**, offering panoramic views of the surrounding coastal areas.
- It also holds strategic importance by facilitating smoother **transportation of goods and personnel,** particularly in the coastal region of Gujarat.

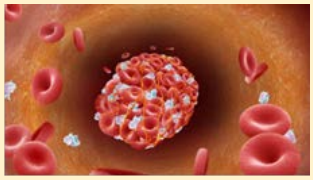
Purple Festival

The President of India will inaugurate 'Purple Fest' at Amrit Udyaan in the Rashtrapati Bhawan today.

About Purple Festival:

- The Purple Festival is an **event which will be organized by the Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities.**
- The festival **aims at raising awareness about different disabilities** and their impact on people's lives and also challenges the **misconceptions**, **prejudices**, **stigma** and **stereotypes** revolving around disabilities and promotes understanding, acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities within society.
- The key activities at 'Purple Fest' will be Amrit Udyaan visit, **Know your disabilities, Purple Cafe**, **Purple Kaleidoscope, Purple Live Experience Zone** and **Purple Sports** among others.
- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities under **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** is organizing the Purple Fest after the success of '**International Purple Fest, 2024' at Goa from 8-13 January**.

Haemophilia



Recently, a team of scientists has engineered nanoparticles that can treat haemophilia.

About Haemophilia:

- Haemophilia is a **genetic disorder that prevents the body from clotting blood.**
- It's caused by a **mutation in one of the genes** that produce clotting factor proteins.
- These genes are located on the **X chromosome**.
- There are **three types of haemophilia: A, B, and C,** each characterized by specific clotting factor deficiencies.
- Symptoms of haemophilia include **bruising**, **joint pain**, **unexplained bleeding**, **blood in urine** or **stool**, **prolonged nosebleeds**, persistent wound bleeding, bleeding gums and easily bruised skin.

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Blanets

About Blanets:

- A blanet is a **hypothetical type of planet** that orbits a black hole.
- Blanets are similar to other planets, but **they orbit a black hole instead of a star or brown dwarf.**
- They have **enough mass to be rounded** by their own gravity, but not enough to start thermonuclear fusion and become stars.
- Blanets are **planets featured in Christopher Nolan's 2014** film Interstellar.
- Scientists in **Japan theorized in 2019** that planets could form in massive dust and gas clouds near supermassive black holes.
- Planets are believed to form in the dust and gas swirling around young stars, similar to the process near **supermassive black holes.**
- Blanets are **expected to be approximately 3,000 times larger than Earth.**
- Black holes are surrounded by **colossal discs of gas and dust** that they swing around, pull in and heat up.

Place in News

Afghanistan

Recently, the World Health Organization has announced that more than 2.86 lakh people have been afflicted with respiratory illness in Afghanistan since the beginning of January 2024.

Afghanistan (Capital: Kabul)

Location: Afghanistan, officially known as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a **landlocked country** located in South Central Asia.

Boundaries: Afghanistan shares its border with **Iran** (West), **Pakistan** (South & East), **Turkmenistan**, **Uzbekistan** and **Tajikistan** (North) and **China** (Northeast).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Afghanistan is **Noshaq Peak**.
- Major rivers in Afghanistan include the **Amu Darya**, **Helmand**, **Kabul**, **Harirud**, and **Panj River**.
- Afghanistan is known for its significant mineral deposits, including **copper**, **iron ore**, **gold**, **lithium** and rare earth elements.
- Afghanistan was the ancient focal point of the **Silk Road** and migration.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Where was the country's longest cable-stayed bridge, 'Sudarshan Setu' inaugurated? - **Gujarat**
- Which institute launched India's largest drone pilot training facility? **- IIT Guwahati**
- Launched by which ministry, NaViGate Bharat simplifies access to government-related videos and initiatives? **- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**
- Where is Attukal Pongal festival celebrated? **- Kerala**
- In which state or union territory is the Kiru Hydel Project located? **- Jammu & Kashmir**