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Current affairs summary for prelims

8 June, 2024

H5N2 Bird Flu

Context: *The World Health Organization (WHO) reported the first-ever human death from the H5N2 bird flu strain in Mexico on Wednesday (June 5).*

- **Understanding H5N2 Avian Influenza:**
  - H5N2 is a subtype of the avian influenza virus that primarily infects birds such as chickens, ducks, turkeys, falcons, and ostriches.
  - Infected birds often show mild or no symptoms, but some variants can be highly pathogenic, leading to the culling of thousands of birds during outbreaks.
- **Human Health Impact:**
  - People who work with birds can be infected by H5N2 but usually experience minimal health effects, such as conjunctivitis or mild respiratory illness.
  - There is no evidence of human-to-human spread of H5N2.
- **First Human Case in Mexico:**
  - On June 5, 2024, Mexico reported the first confirmed human case of H5N2, raising concerns about the virus's ability to infect humans without direct contact with infected birds.
- **Global Concerns:**
  - Avian influenza is a zoonotic disease, posing a global health emergency due to its potential to spread from animals to humans.
  - The interconnected nature of the poultry industry and international travel increases the risk of wider outbreaks.
- **Previous Human Cases:**
  - Human infections with avian influenza viruses, including H5N1, have occurred since 1997, highlighting the importance of continuous monitoring and preparedness.
- **WHO Response:**
  - The WHO emphasizes the need for heightened vigilance and preventive measures, such as avoiding contact with sick birds and implementing robust surveillance systems.

Coalition Government

Context: *For the first time since 1962, a government has secured a third consecutive term after serving two consecutive terms spanning a decade.*

- **Coalition Government:**
  - A coalition government forms when multiple political parties come together to govern based on a common agreed programme.
  - Typically occurs in modern parliaments when no single party secures a clear majority.
- **Features:**
  - Requires at least two parties to form the government, often prioritizing pragmatism over ideology.
  - Dynamic nature as coalition players and groups dissolve and form new alliances.
  - Operates on a minimum programme, which may not fully satisfy all coalition members' aspirations.
- **Pre-poll and Post-poll Coalition:**
  - **Pre-poll Coalition:** Offers advantages by presenting a joint manifesto to the electorate.
  - **Post-poll Coalition:** Aimed at power-sharing and government administration post-election.

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Recommendations of Punchhi and Sarkaria Commission on Coalition:

➢ **Punchhi Commission Recommendation:**

- The party or combination of parties which commands the wide support in the Legislative Assembly should be called upon to form the Government.
- If there is a pre-poll alliance or coalition, it should be treated as one political party and if such coalition obtains a majority, leader of such coalition shall be called by the Governor to form the Government.
- In case no party or pre-poll coalition has a clear majority, Governor should select the Chief Minister in the order preference indicated here:
- The group of parties which had pre-poll alliance commanding the largest number.
- The largest single party staking a claim to form the government with the support of others.
- A post-electoral coalition with all partners joining the government.
- A post-electoral alliance with some parties joining the government and the remaining including independents supporting the government from outside.

➢ **Sarkaria Commission Recommendation:**

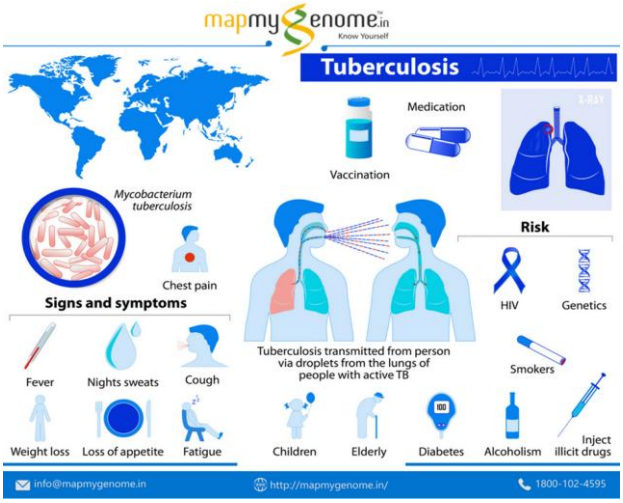
- The interstate council worked whenever regional political parties had a major role to play at the national level. This signifies the role of coalition government in which regional parties play an important role.

Tuberculosis reduction stalled in India

Context: *An official from the Health Ministry mentioned that India's efforts to eliminate TB by 2025 have stalled*.

➢ **Current Status of Tuberculosis (TB):**

- India has been battling TB for over 50 years, with an estimated 480,000 deaths annually.
- Over 1,400 patients succumb to TB every day in India, with more than a million cases going unreported each year.
- India accounts for about 25% of the world's TB burden, with approximately 2.64 million cases in 2021.
- Despite ambitious goals to eliminate TB by 2025, India's progress has been slow.
- Globally, over 10 million new TB cases are reported each year, with India contributing to 27% of the total burden.
- WHO estimates India had around 2,590,000 new TB cases in 2021.



➢ **Challenges in Eradicating TB:**

- Inefficiency in diagnosing and treating cases, especially in the private sector.
- Slow decline in TB cases under national programs, hindering progress towards SDG and End TB targets.
- Socio-economic challenges exacerbate the complexity of TB, including drug resistance and healthcare disparities.
- Unregulated private healthcare leads to irrational use of TB drugs.
- Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR TB) poses a significant challenge.
- Concerns exist about TB transmission through unpasteurized dairy products.

➢ **Measures Taken by India to Eradicate TB:**

- National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) aims to reduce TB burden by 2025.
- National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination targets ending TB by 2025 with a focus on private sector engagement and high-risk populations.
- Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) provides nutritional support to TB patients.
- Patient Provider Support Agencies (PPSA) engage the private sector in TB care.
- Universal Drug Susceptibility Testing (UDST) ensures early detection of drug-resistant TB.
- Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan mobilizes community stakeholders for TB support.
- Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres decentralizes TB care services.
- New drugs like Bedaquiline and Delamanid are available for drug-resistant TB management.

Global Measures to Eradicate TB:

- WHO's End TB Strategy aims to reduce TB incidence and deaths by 2030.
- The Global Fund fights against HIV, TB, and malaria worldwide.
- Stop TB Partnership aims to revolutionize TB care and end TB by 2030.
- Sustainable Development Goal 3 targets ending the TB epidemic by 2030.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

SEBI

Recently, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has received the Best Conduct of Business Regulator in Asia Pacific award by The Asian Banker in Hong Kong.

About the SEBI:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is the **regulatory body** for the **securities and commodity markets** in India under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Finance**, Government of India.
- **Established on April 12, 1988**, SEBI was **initially a non-statutory body**, but it gained **statutory status on January 30, 1992**, through the **SEBI Act, 1992.**
- It is a **quasi-legislative** and **quasi-judicial body** which can **draft regulations**, conduct **inquiries, pass rulings** and **impose penalties**.
- SEBI functions to meet the needs of issuers by providing a **marketplace to raise finance,** investors by ensuring safety and accurate information and intermediaries by fostering a competitive professional market.
- It is **headed by a Chairman, appointed by the Central Government** and includes members from various sectors including the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of India, along with experts in the field.
- It is a **member of the International Organization of Securities Commissions** (IOSCO).

Onge Tribe

Recently, the Andaman Islands' Onge tribe celebrated the birth of a baby boy to King Totoko and Queen Priya, increasing the tribe's total population to 136.

About the Onge Tribe:

- The Onge are an indigenous **Andamanese ethnic group** and **one of the oldest tribes in India**.
- They are traditionally **hunter-gatherers** and fishers, but also **practice plant cultivation**.
- They are the part of the **Negrito racial stock,** which is believed to be a remnant of an early migration out of Africa.
- They **call themselves En-iregale**, which means **'perfect person**.
- This tribe is also one of the **world's least prolific** and **infertile communities**.
- The Onge are semi-nomadic and **live in two reserve camps on Little Andaman, Dugong Creek** in the northeast and South Bay.
- Until the **1940s,** they were the sole permanent inhabitants of **Goubalambabey** (the Onge name for Little Andaman).

Volkhov River

Recently, the External Affairs Ministry stated that the four Indian students who were studying at the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University in Russia, drowned in an unfortunate incident in the Volkhov river.

About the Volkhov River:

- The Volkhov River is located in **northwestern Russia**.
- It **originates from Lake Ilmen** and **flows into Lake Ladoga**.
- This river is historically significant as part of the ancient **trade route "from the Varangians to the Greeks."**
- Important **tributaries** of the Volkhov River include the **Vishera** and the **Msta Rivers**.

Place in News

United Arab Emirates

Recently, Dubai conclave unveiled major advancements in India-UAE digital payments.

United Arab Emirates (Capital: Abu Dhabi)

Location: United Arab Amirates is a country located in West Asia.

Boundaries: United Arab Amirates shares its borders with **Oman** (East), **Persian Gulf** (North), **Saudi Arabia** (South and West) and **Qatar** (Northwest).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is **Jebel Jais.**
- The **Burj Khalifa** in Dubai, the world's tallest building
- The UAE has a desert climate with very hot summers and warm winters.
- The United Arab Emirates is **rich in petroleum**, **natural gas**, **limestone**, **gypsum**, marble, **chromite**, **copper**, sulfur and abundant sand and gravel.

Membership: It is a member of various international organizations, including the **United Nations**, **OPEC** and the **Gulf Cooperation Council** (GCC).

POINTS TO PONDER

- Under which international convention have the Nagi and Nakti bird sanctuaries in Bihar's Jamui district been recognized, thereby increasing the total Ramsar sites in India to 82? **– Ramsar Convention**
- According to a recent observation by the Delhi High Court, which scheme's fund utilization by Members of Parliament (MPs) is outside the jurisdiction of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)? **– MPLAD (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) Scheme**
- The Cassini-Huygens Mission, which challenged the MOND theory, is a joint endeavour of NASA, the European Space Agency, and which other space agency? **– Italian Space Agency**
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) recently elected which countries to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)? **– Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama and Somalia**
- Which countries launched the Biopharmaceutical Alliance in response to drug supply shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic? **– India, South Korea, the US, Japan and the European Union**