

7 June, 2023

Manual Scavenging

Context: According to the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, out of the 766 districts in the country, only 508 have been declared free from manual scavenging officially.

What is Manual Scavenging?

- Manual scavenging is defined as the **removal of human excrement from public streets and dry latrines, as well as the cleaning of septic tanks, gutters, and sewers.**
- The **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSR) was enacted in India to ban** the practice of manual scavenging.
- The Act **prohibits any individual from manually cleaning, carrying, disposing of, or handling human excreta** in any manner until its proper disposal.
- Manual scavenging is recognized as a **"dehumanizing practice"** under the Act.
- **In the past two years, the Ministry consistently denied manual scavenging deaths** in the country during Parliament sessions.
- **Deaths were attributed to the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.**
- The **ministry differentiates between Manual Scavenging and Hazardous cleaning of sewers**, and deaths have been attributed to the latter.

Government Efforts and Supreme Court Judgements regarding Manual Scavenging

- **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (Amendment) Bill, 2020:**
 - The bill proposes complete mechanization of sewer cleaning and provides on-site protection for workers.
 - It suggests compensation for manual scavengers in case of sewer deaths.
 - It aims to amend The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
 - The bill is currently awaiting cabinet approval.
- **The Building and Maintenance of Insanitary Latrines Act, 2013:**
 - This act prohibits the construction or maintenance of unsanitary toilets and the hiring of manual scavengers for cleaning.
 - It also imposes a constitutional responsibility to provide alternative jobs and other assistance to manual scavenging communities.
- **Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:**
 - The Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989 provides protection to sanitation workers, particularly those belonging to the Scheduled Caste.
 - It plays a crucial role in liberating manual scavengers from their traditional occupations.
- **Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge:**
 - Launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the challenge aims to make sewer cleaning mechanized.
 - It requires states to provide proper gear and oxygen tanks for emergencies where human entry into sewer lines is unavoidable.
- **Swachhta Abhiyan App:**
 - The app is designed to identify and geotag insanitary latrines and manual scavengers.

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- Its purpose is to replace insanitary latrines with sanitary ones and rehabilitate manual scavengers to ensure a dignified life.
- **National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE):**
 - The NAMASTE scheme, jointly undertaken by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, aims to eliminate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.
- **Supreme Court Judgment:**
 - A 2014 Supreme Court order mandates the government to identify individuals who died in sewage work since 1993 and provide compensation of Rs. 10 lakh to their families.

World Food Safety Day

Context: Every year, June 7th is celebrated as World Food Safety Day.

- The observance is jointly facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

About World Food Safety Day:

- It is organized in India by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that every June 7 would be celebrated as World Food Safety Day.
- It is observed annually on 7 June to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks.
- This year's World Food Safety Day theme – 'Food standards save lives'
- It highlights that the production and consumption of safe food has immediate and long-term benefits for people, the planet and the economy.
- It aims to draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development.beyond Eurasia.

Initiatives for Food Safety

Globally:

- **The Codex Alimentarius**, also known as the "Food Code," is a collection of standards, guidelines, and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- The Commission is an intergovernmental body comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with 188 Member Countries and one Member Organization (The European Union).
- Since 1963, the Codex has worked to establish harmonized international food standards that protect consumer health and ensure fair trade practices.

Indian Initiatives:

"Save Food, Share Food, Share Joy" was launched by the FSSAI in December 2017.

- It aims to promote food sharing among consumers and food businesses in India and addresses the issues of hunger, food loss, and food waste through collaboration with food collection partners.
- The Eat Right India Movement was launched by FSSAI in July 2018 with the tagline "Sahi Bhojan. Behtar Jeevan."

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- It focuses on improving public health in India and combating negative nutritional trends to prevent lifestyle diseases.
- The movement adopts a comprehensive approach combining regulations, capacity building, collaboration, and empowerment to ensure food is safe and healthy for both people and the planet.

State Food Safety Index:

- FSSAI has developed the State Food Safety Index to evaluate the performance of states on various food safety parameters.
- The index measures Human Resources and Institutional Data, Compliance, Food Testing Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training & Capacity Building, and Consumer Empowerment.
- It provides a quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model to assess food safety across all states and union territories.

Eat Right Mela:

- The FSSAI headquarters in New Delhi organizes the annual Eat Right Mela.
- It is a street food festival designed as an infotainment model to engage and educate citizens about making the right food choices.
- The Mela offers information on safe food practices, healthy diets, tests for adulterants, expert dietary advice, government programs and initiatives, and more.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

- It has been established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which consolidates various acts and orders that have hitherto handled food-related issues.
- It works as an autonomous body established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- **Aims:**
 - To establish a single reference point for all matters relating to food safety and standards.
 - To lay down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.

Draft Pandemic Instruments of WHO and Anti-microbial Resistance

Context: The most recent iteration of the Pandemic Instrument, commonly known as the "pandemic treaty," was distributed to member nations during the World Health Assembly.

About Pandemic Treaty

- The drafting and negotiation process for the Pandemic Instrument began in December 2021 following the agreement of the World Health Assembly.
- The aim of the instrument is to safeguard nations and communities from future pandemic emergencies, in accordance with the WHO Constitution.
- Civil society organizations and prominent experts, including the Global Leaders Group on Antimicrobial Resistance, have advocated for the inclusion of antimicrobial resistance as a significant concern in the instrument.
- While the focus has primarily been on preventing pandemics similar to COVID-19, it is crucial to recognize that not all pandemics in the past or future will be caused by viruses.

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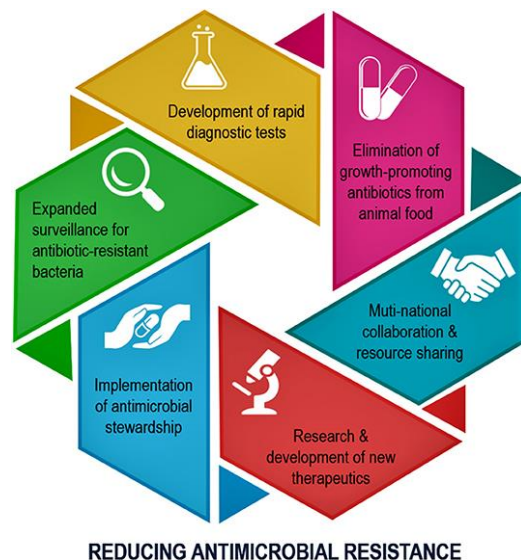


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- Historical pandemics caused by bacterial diseases such as plague and cholera highlight the potential for future pandemics caused by bacteria or other microbes.

Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR)

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) refers to the ability of microorganisms to resist the effects of antimicrobial drugs used to treat infections.
- AMR leads to difficulties in treating infections, increases the risk of disease spread, and can cause severe illness and death.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) considers AMR as one of the top ten global health threats.
- Microorganisms that develop resistance to antimicrobial drugs are often called "superbugs."
- In India, over 56,000 new-born deaths occur annually due to sepsis caused by organisms resistant to first-line antibiotics.
- Hospitals have reported a mortality rate of 50-60% for COVID-19 patients who acquire drug-resistant infections.
- New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1 (NDM-1), a multi-drug resistance determinant, emerged in this region.
- Multi-drug resistant typhoid is originating from South Asia has affected Africa, Europe, and other parts of Asia.



NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

China and Russia Conduct Joint Air Patrols



Context:

China and Russia recently conducted joint air force patrols over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea.

Key Highlights:

Joint Air Patrols: China and Russia conducted their sixth joint aerial patrol in accordance with their annual military cooperation plan.

Geographic Scope: The patrols took place over waters bordering Japan, the Korean peninsula, and Taiwan. This geographic proximity raised concerns among neighboring countries.

South Korea's Response: South Korea confirmed that four Russian and four Chinese military aircraft had entered its air defense identification zone (ADIZ). As a response, South Korea deployed fighter planes and took tactical steps in preparation for potential emergencies.

Air Defense Identification Zone: An ADIZ is an area beyond a country's airspace that it tries to monitor and control for security reasons. However, this concept is not defined by any international treaty.

Successful Test of Indigenous Heavyweight Torpedo

Context:

The Indian Navy has conducted a successful test of an indigenously designed and developed heavyweight torpedo called Varunastra.

Key Highlights:

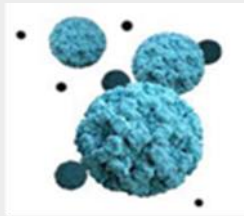
- Varunastra is an indigenous heavyweight torpedo designed and developed by the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory in Visakhapatnam, under the Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The Indian Navy test-fired Varunastra, showcasing its effectiveness as an anti-submarine weapon. The torpedo demonstrated its capabilities by hitting the target with a live warhead.
- Following extensive trials, the induction of Varunastra has begun, and it is set to become the



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	primary anti-submarine torpedo for all naval warships. It will replace older torpedoes on ships equipped to fire heavyweight torpedoes. ➤ The successful development and induction of Varunastra strengthen India's naval defense capabilities by providing an advanced and indigenous solution for countering submarine threats.
Van Dhan Vikas Kendra 	Context: In Odisha's Kandhamal district, tribal women have found a way to turn Mahua flowers into a source of livelihood. Tribal Women's Initiative: ➤ Around 120 tribal women from Van Dhan Vikas Kendras in Odisha's Kandhamal district prepare laddus, cakes, jam, toffees, pickles, squash, pakodas, and biscuits using Mahua flowers. ➤ The women attended training in Maharashtra to learn how to create these products. Employment Opportunities: ➤ The initiative aims to provide gainful employment to tribal women by enabling them to produce value-added dishes from Mahua flowers. ➤ The district administration plans to equip almost all tribal women in the district with the skills to create such products. Economic Importance: ➤ Mahua flower collection serves as a significant source of employment for the poor tribal population in Odisha. It provides around 25-30 days of employment per year. ➤ Mahua flowers are rich in nutrients, including sugar, proteins, fibers, calcium, phosphorus, and Vitamin C.
Norovirus 	Context: A recent voyage of the Celebrity Summit witnessed an outbreak of norovirus, with several crew members and passengers experiencing symptoms of the infection. What is Norovirus? Norovirus is a common and highly contagious virus known for causing symptoms like nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. It is often referred to as the "stomach flu" or the "winter vomiting bug." People of all ages can get infected, and the virus spreads rapidly. Modes of Transmission: Noroviruses commonly spread through contaminated food or water during preparation. They can also be transmitted through contact with surfaces or close contact with an infected person. Symptoms: The initial symptoms of norovirus infection include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, fever, headaches, and body aches. In severe cases, dehydration can occur due to fluid loss. Treatment: Currently, there are no available vaccines to prevent norovirus. Treatment mainly focuses on alleviating symptoms and maintaining hydration.
Gandhi's Satyagraha 130th Anniversary	Context: The Indian Navy is participating in a commemorative event in Durban to mark the 130th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's 'Satyagraha' against apartheid. Historical Significance: Mahatma Gandhi's arrival in Durban in 1893 and his eviction from a first-class compartment at Pietermaritzburg station due to racial discrimination marked the beginning of his fight against apartheid and the birth of Satyagraha. Recognition: In 1997, the Freedom of Pietermaritzburg was posthumously conferred on Mahatma Gandhi in a ceremony attended by Nelson Mandela, recognizing Gandhi's sacrifice and dedication in the face of oppression. Azadi Ka Amrit Mahostav: INS Trishul's visit to Durban is part of the Indian Navy's celebration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahostav, where key moments that shaped India's independence struggle are honored. The Indian Navy's participation in this commemorative event pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's legacy and reinforces the strong historical ties between India and South Africa. 

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