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— Disclaimer —

The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MSP FOR FARMERS

CONTEXT

The recently enacted law that dismantles the monopoly of APMC (agricultural produce market committee) mandis, has raised concerns that farmers may no longer be assured MSP for their crop.
Let's understand the basis of MSP, how is it fixed, and how binding is it?

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- It was in the early 1960s when India was facing an enormous shortage of cereals that new agricultural policies were born marking the start of the Green Revolution.

- In 1964, the government set up the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** to procure foodgrains from farmers at remunerative prices, and through the **public distribution system** distribute them to consumers and also maintain **buffer stock** for food security.

- In order to buy foodgrains, there had to be a policy on pricing.

- In 1965, an **Agricultural Prices Commission** was set up to advise on the pricing policy for agricultural commodities and its impact on the economy.

- It was then that the Price Support Policy of the Government came in, providing a foolproof solution to agricultural producers against a sharp fall in farm prices.

- The minimum guaranteed prices are fixed to set a floor below which market prices cannot fall. If no one else buys it, the government will buy the stock at this minimum guaranteed prices.

- This is what came to be known as the **minimum support price or MSP.**
  - This policy took its final shape around **1974-76**.
  - The MSP serves as a long-term guarantee for investment decisions of producers. It came with an assurance that prices would not fall below a fixed level, even in case of a bumper crop.
  - MSP was introduced to provide financial stability to the agricultural system and encourage production.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

What is Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

- The **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** is only a government policy that is part of administrative decision-making. The government declares MSPs for crops, but there's no law mandating their implementation.

- The Centre currently fixes MSPs for 23 farm commodities —
  - ➤ 7 cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, bajra, jowar, ragi and barley)
  - ➤ 5 pulses (chana, arhar/tur, urad, moong and masur)
  - ➤ 7 oilseeds (rapeseed-mustard, groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, sesamum, safflower and nigerseed)
  - ➤ 4 commercial crops (cotton, sugarcane, copra and raw jute) — based on the CACP's recommendations.

Who announced MSP?

- The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces MSP based on the recommendations of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).**

- The CACP takes into account demand and supply, the cost of production and price trends in the market among other things when fixing MSPs.

- The price is announced at the beginning of the sowing season.

Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP)

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.

- It came into existence in January 1965.

- Currently, the Commission comprises a Chairman, Member Secretary, one Member (Official) and two Members (Non-Official).
  - ➤ The non-official members are representatives of the farming community and usually have an active association with the farming community.

- It can recommend MSPs, but the decision on fixing (or even not fixing) and enforcement rests finally with the government.

The next step in the process

- The Food Corporation of India and NAFED help the Centre procure select food crops with the **help of the States.**

- Procured farm products are kept in government warehouses and distributed through the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** and various food security programmes.

> ### Public Distribution System (PDS)
>
> - Public distribution system is a government-sponsored chain of shops entrusted with the work of distributing basic food and non-food commodities to the needy sections of the society at very cheap prices.
>
> - Food Corporation of India manages the public distribution system.

Why MSP is important?

- Price volatility makes life difficult for farmers. Though prices of agri commodities may soar while in short supply, during years of bumper production, prices of the very same commodities plummet.

- MSPs ensure that farmers get a minimum price for their produce in adverse markets.

- MSPs have also been used as a tool by the Government to incentivise farmers to grow crops that are in short supply.

MSP and the new Law

- It is somewhat strange that the concept of minimum support price finds no mention in any law even if it has been around for decades.

- While the government does declare the MSP twice a year, there is no law making MSP mandatory.

- What this technically means is that the government, though it buys at MSP from farmers, is not obliged by law to do so.

- As a matter of fact, there is no law which says that MSP can be imposed on private traders as well.

- The CACP had asked earlier recommended legislation to iron out a concrete MSP law for farmers, but it was not accepted by the Centre.

> ### The Farmers Bill
>
> - The **Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020** allows farmers to sell their produce outside APMC mandis to whoever, even the end customer, offers a higher price.
>
> - The second one — **The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020** — allows farmers to enter into a contract farming agreement the buyer for procurement of crops at pre-approved prices.
>
> - The third bill is **The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill** which declassifies items like onions, cereals, pulses, potatoes, edible oilseeds and oils as essential items in normal circumstances.

◉ CONCLUSION:

- The Farm Bills technically have nothing to do with MSP and since there is no existing legislative framework for MSP, it is difficult to see how MSP could have been worked into the Bills.

****

NET ZERO BY 2060: CHINA'S BOLD NEW CARBON EMISSIONS GOAL

CONTEXT

In a latest announcement, China has announced it plans to boost country's Paris climate accord target and called for a green revolution.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- China's announcement came just minutes after US President Donald Trump blasted Beijing for "rampant pollution".
  - ➤ The US and China have been hit this year by extreme weather of the kind predicted by scientists to accompany climate change.
  - ➤ In China, heavy rains over the summer unleashed the most punishing flood season in about 30 years, while the US is facing one of its busiest hurricane seasons at the same time that record wildfires ravage western states.
- European officials were also expected to press China to toughen its climate goals.
- The EU wanted Chinese emissions to peak by 2025 instead of the country's target date of 2030.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

Is it a realistic plan?

- Going carbon neutral means that China would remove the same amount of carbon it's emitting into the atmosphere to achieve net-zero carbon emissions.
- So, by 2060, China would theoretically only use clean energy sources and capture or offset any remaining emissions.
- But China is yet to define exactly what that would look like.
- Still, the target puts China more closely in alignment with the European Union, the UK, and other countries that have committed to carbon neutrality by 2050, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said is required to prevent over 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming.

Carbon neutrality

- The term "carbon neutrality" means releasing no additional CO_2 into the atmosphere.
- Though technically it allows countries to keep emitting if they ensure that an equal amount is captured again in some form.

Stronger set of goals under the Paris Agreement

- Along with the pledge to be carbon neutral by 2060, China also announced to submit a stronger set of goals under the Paris agreement.
- China would aim to peak carbon emissions before 2030, upping the commitment from "around" 2030.

Will it be a challenge for China?

- The goal will be a challenge for China, which relies heavily for its **electricity on coal**, one of the most **carbon-intensive fossil fuels**.
- China released the equivalent of 10 billion tons of carbon dioxide, or CO2, into the atmosphere in 2018, according to the Global Carbon Project that tracks emissions worldwide.
- That was almost twice as much as the United States and three times as much as the European Union.

Which other countries are on the same path?

- Twenty-nine nations before China have pledged to achieve climate neutrality in different years, according to the Carbon Neutrality Coalition.
- With China, the 30 countries that have some kind of carbon neutrality pledges, account for about 43 per cent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.
- The largest polluting countries not on the list are the **United States, India, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey, Brazil and Australia.**

⊙ CONCLUSION:

- China has yet to publish an official plan for how it would achieve carbon neutrality, but climate researchers have mapped out pathways. The good news: Researchers say it is possible.

LINK BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILDFIRES

CONTEXT

While wildfires are typical in both California and parts of Australia in the summer months, the intensity and scale of wildfires that these areas have seen in recent years has raised some concerns among scientists about the linkages between human-induced climate change and fire risk.

⊙ ABOUT:

- In an updated review of scientific articles that try to establish a link between climate change and fire risk published since January 2020, scientists note that human-induced climate change promotes the conditions on which wildfires depend, enhancing their likelihood and challenging suppression efforts.

- The update focuses on the ongoing wildfires in the western US and the bushfires that ravaged southeastern Australia in 2019-2020.

- Further, the authors note that climate change increases the frequency and severity of fire weather around the world and that land management alone "cannot explain recent increases in wildfire because increased fire weather from climate change amplifies fire risk where fuels remain available".

Factors that can influence fire weather

- The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was published in 2013, identified a few factors that could influence the way wildfires play out. These include-
  - ➤ global increase in average temperatures
  - ➤ global increases in the frequency, intensity and extent of heatwaves (breaching of historically extreme temperature thresholds)
  - ➤ regional increases in the frequency, duration and intensity of droughts

Understanding from new trends of forest fire

- Scientists are wary of attributing any single contemporary event to climate change, mainly because of the difficulty in completely ruling out the possibility of the event having been caused by some other reason, or a result of natural variability.

- However, new analysis shows that natural variability is superimposed on the increasingly warm and dry conditions that have resulted from climate change, which has led to more extreme fires and more extreme fire seasons.

- Further, there is an "unequivocal and pervasive role of climate change in increasing the intensity and length in which fire weather occurs".

- While land management is also likely to contribute to the wildfires, it does not alone account for the recent increases in the extent and severity of the wildfires in the western US and in southeast Australia.

Forest fire in Australia

- While bushfires are routine in Australia in the summer months, the scale and intensity of the fires last year was unprecedented.

- The fires killed thousands of animals and impacted more than 10 million hectares of forest land, which is an area the size of South Korea.

- Scientists suggested at the time that there was strong evidence to suggest that the bushfires, which were especially fierce last year, could be linked to climate change.

Why Forest Fires Are Both Necessary and Dangerous?

- **The Ecological Benefits of Wildfires**
  - ➤ **Promote ecological health:** Humans have been performing such burns for thousands of years and for multiple reasons, but, today, they are mainly used to promote ecological health and prevent larger, more damaging, uncontrolled fires.
  - ➤ **Bring survival and production:** Fire is a natural phenomenon, and nature has evolved with its presence. Many ecosystems benefit from periodic fires, because they clear out dead organic material—and some plant and animal populations require the benefits fire brings to survive and reproduce.
  - ➤ **Increase in soil fertility:** When humans perform a prescribed burn, the goal is to remove that layer of decay in a controlled manner, allowing the other, healthy parts of the ecosystem to thrive.
    - Moreover, nutrients released from the burned material, which includes dead plants and animals, return more quickly into the soil than if they had slowly decayed over time.

- In this way, fire increases soil fertility—a benefit that has been exploited by farmers for centuries.

  ➤ **Essential for life cycle:** Several plants actually require fire to move along their life cycles. Even some animals depend on fire.

- **Harmful Effects of Wildfires**

  ➤ **Long term effect on nature**: Wildfires can have immediate and long term effects on the quality of rivers, lakes, and streams.

  ➤ **Prevent absorption of water:** The most noticeable impact of wildfires is storm water runoff. After the loss of vegetation, the ground's soil becomes hydrophobic and prevents the absorption of water.

    - This inability to absorb water promotes the transportation of debris and sediment into larger bodies of water, further polluting valuable and essential resources.

  ➤ **Post-fire flash floods:** Post-fire flash floods become a threat and allow the introduction of heavy metals from ash and soil to infiltrate waterways. Filtering these water sources can be costly as well as time consuming.

  ➤ **A threat to survival:** The flames from these fires destroy the food source and homes of many animals, threatening their survival. For plants and trees that can survive the flames, they are susceptible to disease, fungus, and insects due to their decreased resistance following burn injuries.

  ➤ **Impact on air quality:** Wildfires have both immediate and long-term impacts on air quality. As a forest burns, large amounts of smoke are released into the atmosphere. These smoke particles are typically small and made up of gases and water vapor.

  ➤ **A threat to human health:** Air pollution from fires has the potential to travel great distances and oftentimes may pose a threat to human health. These small particles can become lodged deep within lungs, making it difficult to breath as well as placing additional stress on our hearts.

⊙ **CONCLUSION:**

  ◉ There are many ecological benefits of forest fire but, the present day forest fires are a big issue in many parts of the world. The human-induced climate change has promoted the conditions on which wildfires depends. Hence, regulating bodies need to be vigilant and preemptive with forest fires, in order to help curb their frequency. Further, Regional think-tanks and governing bodies can help create a strategy for at-risk areas where each local population and fire prevention and suppression group can be involved.

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HOW 'HINDI' STANDS THE TEST AMONG A PLETHORA OF LANGUAGES IN INDIA

CONTEXT

The new education policy has made Hindi the centre of a controversy. The main clause that came under fire was the "3-language formula", which is seen as a move to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking states.

◉ BACKGROUND:

- Throughout the world, language is a major market of human identity – so much so that in places such as Europe, nations and language communities – such as the French, Germans and Poles – are seen as synonymous.

- While not as salient in India, here too, language has played a major part in the country's politics.

- In India, the issue of adopting a 'national language' could not be resolved when the Constituent Assembly began drafting India's Constitution.

- The adoption of a national language, the language in which the Constitution was to be written, and the language in which the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly were to be conducted were the main questions debated.

- On the one side were members from the Hindi-speaking provinces who moved a number of pro-Hindi amendments and argued for adopting Hindi as the sole national language.

◉ ANALYSIS:

Linguistic Diversity of India

- India, undoubtably is a treasure trove of linguistic diversity, with nearly 450 living languages — 22 of them granted the status of a 'Scheduled language' under the Constitution.

- Nevertheless, the country also faces the perennial threat of indigenous languages dying.

- As per the **first-ever linguistic survey** conducted, completed between 2010 and 2013, India has already lost over 200 indigenous languages in the last 50 years.

- It is claimed that another 150 languages could vanish in the coming decades.

Language provisions in the Constitution of the Indian Union

- The Constitution adopted in 1950 stipulated that English and Hindi would be used for **the Union's official business** for a period of fifteen years.

- After that time, Hindi was supposed to become the sole official language of the Union.

- It proved impossible to replace English with Hindi, however, because of strong opposition from the southern states, where **Dravidian languages** were spoken.

- They felt that the federal government was trying to impose Hindi across the country, including the south, and preferred to continue using English, which they found more "acceptable" because, unlike Hindi, it was not associated with any particular ethnic group.

- Later, the **Official Languages Act** legally established Hindi and English as the languages used in Congress, while leaving states and territories free to choose their own official languages.

Does India have any national language?

- No. India does not have any national language.

  ➤ A **national language** is a language that is symbolic of a country, usually for historic, cultural and ethnic reasons.

  ➤ An **official language** is only designated for communication at the official level.

The spread of Hindi language

- Widespread resistance to the imposition of Hindi on non-native speakers, especially in Tamil Nadu, led to the passage of the **Official Languages Act of 1963**, which provided for the continued use of English for all official purposes.

- Hindi became the **sole working language** of the Union government by **1965** with the State governments free to function in the language of their choice.

- Meanwhile, the constitutional directive for the Union government to encourage the spread of Hindi was retained within Central government entities in non-Hindi-speaking States.

- Hindi speakers from the IT, construction and other sectors began moving for jobs to the south where many languages and dialects are spoken.

- Despite this migration to States that speak other languages, the Census found that while Hindi is the fastest growing language, the number of speakers of other languages has dropped.

- In Tamil Nadu, for example, over a 10-year period, the number of Tamil speakers of Hindi doubled largely because Tamilians needed to converse with those who came from the north.

Important facts on Hindi

- Hindi belongs to the **Indo-Aryan** branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Hindi, along with English, are the **official languages** of India.

- According to Article 343, *"The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in the Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purpose of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals."*

- Hindi was the language that was adopted by Indian leaders as a symbol of national identity during the struggle for freedom.

- Hindi has been used as a **literary language** since the **twelfth century**.

History of anti-Hindi movement

- The conflict of deciding on Hindi as the official language can be traced back to the pre-Independence days.

- In 1937, the Congress-led government in Madras Presidency under the leadership of **C. Rajagopalachari** introduced compulsory Hindi education in schools across the region. (Madras Presidency was later split into four states of South India — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala).

- This sparked massive protests and anti-Hindi demonstrations, especially by EVR Periyar, a pioneer of rationalist and anti-caste Dravidian politics in the region.

- The agitations lasted for three years, until the move was repealed in 1940.

- After long debates, the Parliament passed 'Official Language Resolution' in 1968.

- Hindi-speaking states had to teach some Indian language besides Hindi and in non-Hindi speaking states, Hindi was to be taught besides English and the local or regional language.

- This three-language formula was accepted by the entire country, but Tamil Nadu remained adamant.

Proportion of South Indian language speakers falling

- While high population growth in North India has helped Hindi surge, lower population growth in the five Dravidian language-speaking states – Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana – has resulted in the proportion of Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam falling.

- While Hindi grew by 161% between 1971 and 2011, for example, the four largest Dravidian languages grew at half that rate – 81% – over the same period.

- In addition, growing migration from north to south has meant a greater presence of Hindi in the five southern states.

How India is losing its language?

- According to the 2001 Census, India has 30 languages that are spoken by more than a million people each.

- The Constitution lists **22 languages** and protects them in the **eighth schedule.**

- Many languages are kept out of this schedule even if they deserve to be included.
  - This includes Tulu which is spoken by over 1.8 million people and has inscriptions dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries.

- When a refined language loses its status in literary and daily interactions, the way of life associated with it also vanishes.

- On the other hand, Hindi, a much younger Indo-Aryan language, has been gaining prominence since before independence. Old Hindi assimilated words from Persian.

- With the arrival of Islamic administrative rule in north India, it became Hindustani.

- The growing importance of Hindustani in colonial India and the association of Urdu with Muslims prompted Hindus in north India to develop a Sanskritised version, leading to the formation of a modern standard Hindi a century later.

- It was based on the vernacular of Delhi and the surrounding region and came to replace prestige dialects such as Awadhi, Maithili and Braj.

- The literary value of these dialects diminished in due course.

When does a language become extinct?

- According to the criteria adopted by UNESCO, a language becomes extinct, **when nobody speaks or remembers the language.**

- UNESCO has categorized languages on basis of endangerment as:
  - Vulnerable
  - definitely endangered
  - severely endangered
  - critically endangered

- Some critically endangered languages as per UNESCO are:
  - ➤ Aimol, spoken in Manipur
  - ➤ Bagahti spoken in Himachal Pradesh
  - ➤ Nihali spoken in Maharashtra
  - ➤ Toto in West Bengal
  - ➤ Todo in Tamil Nadu

Government schemes to protect the language

- Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India
- Under the scheme "Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India", the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) is working on the protection, preservation and documentation of endangered languages.

- It is the onus of the CIIL to protect, preserve and document endangered languages, even language spoken by less than 1000 people also as against the scheme, which is preserving the languages, spoken by less than 10000 people.

Closing thoughts

- National integration in a multilingual country does not require the imposition of one official language on the country, especially when the language selected for the purpose is one of its many regional languages even if it happens to be that of the largest linguistic group in the country. At the same time, the convenience, in fact the necessity, of having one or more languages as the official (not national, as all languages spoken in a country can claim to be national) language or languages for centre-state and inter-state communication for political, economic, legal and even social reasons cannot be disputed.

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HOW '3 PRIOR PANDEMICS' TRIGGERED MASSIVE SOCIETAL SHIFTS?

CONTEXT

Pandemics can alter a society's fundamental worldview, upend core economic structures and sway power struggles among nations

⊙ **BACKGROUND:**

- Before March of this year, few probably thought disease could be a significant driver of human history.

- Not so anymore. People are beginning to understand that the little changes COVID-19 has already ushered in or accelerated – telemedicine, remote work, social distancing, the death of the handshake, online shopping, the virtual disappearance of cash and so on – have begun to change `their way of life.

  ➤ They may not be sure whether these changes will outlive the pandemic.

  ➤ And they may be uncertain whether these changes are for good or ill.

- Three previous plagues could yield some clues about the way COVID-19 might bend the arc of history.

- Pandemics tend to shape human affairs in three ways.

  ➤ They can profoundly alter a society's fundamental worldview

  ➤ They can upend core economic structures

  ➤ They can sway power struggles among nations

Sickness spurs the rise of the Christian West

- **Where:** Roman Empire

- **When:** A.D. 165 to A.D. 262

- **Impact:** It's been estimated that the combined pandemics' (Antonine plague, and its twin, the Cyprian plague) mortality rate was anywhere from one-quarter to one-third of the empire's population.

- While staggering, the number of deaths tells only part of the story. This also triggered a profound transformation in the religious culture of the Roman Empire.

- On the eve of the Antonine plague, the empire was pagan. The vast majority of the population worshipped multiple gods and spirits and believed that rivers, trees, fields and buildings each had their own spirit.

- Christianity, a monotheistic religion that had little in common with paganism, had only 40,000 adherents, no more than 0.07% of the empire's population.

- Yet within a generation of the end of the Cyprian plague, Christianity had become the dominant religion in the empire.

The plague of Justinian and the fall of Rome

- **Where:** Roman Empire

- **When:** A.D. 542 – A.D. 755

- **Impact:** During its two centuries of recurrence, it killed an estimated 25% to 50% of the population – anywhere from 25 million to 100 million people.

- This massive loss of lives crippled the economy, triggering a financial crisis that exhausted the state's coffers and hobbled the empire's once mighty military.

- In the east, Rome's principal geopolitical rival, **Sassanid Persia**, was also devastated by the plague and was therefore in no position to exploit the Roman Empire's weakness.

- But the forces of the **Islamic Rashidun Caliphate in Arabia** – which had long been contained by the Romans and Sasanians – were largely unaffected by the plague.

- Caliph Abu Bakr didn't let the opportunity go to waste. Seizing the moment, his forces swiftly conquered the entire Sasanian Empire while stripping the weakened Roman Empire of its territories in the Levant, the Caucasus, Egypt and North Africa.

- Pre-pandemic, the Mediterranean world had been relatively unified by commerce, politics, religion and culture.

- What emerged was a fractured trio of civilizations jockeying for power and influence:

  ➤ an Islam ic one in the eastern and southern Mediterranean basin

  ➤ a Greek one in the northeastern Mediterranean

  ➤ a European one between the western Mediterranean and the North Sea.

◉ This last civilization – what we now call medieval Europe – was defined by a new, distinctive economic system.

◉ Before the plague, the European economy had been based on slavery.

◉ After the plague, the significantly diminished supply of slaves forced landowners to begin granting plots to nominally "free" laborers – serfs who worked the lord's fields and, in return, received military protection and certain legal rights from the lord.

◉ The seeds of feudalism were planted.

The Black Death of the Middle Ages

◉ **Where:** Europe

◉ **When:** 1347

◉ **Impact:** It subsequently killed between one-third and one-half of the total European population of 80 million people.

◉ But it killed more than people. By the time the pandemic had burned out by the early 1350s, a distinctly modern world emerged – one defined by free labor, technological innovation and a growing middle class.

◉ Before the **Yersinia pestis bacterium** arrived in 1347, Western Europe was a feudal society that was overpopulated.

◉ Labor was cheap, serfs had little bargaining power, social mobility was stymied and there was little incentive to increase productivity.

◉ But the loss of so much life shook up an ossified society.

◉ Labor shortages gave peasants more bargaining power. In the agrarian economy, they also encouraged the widespread adoption of new and existing technologies – the iron plow, the three-field crop rotation system and fertilization with manure, all of which significantly increased productivity.

◉ Beyond the countryside, it resulted in the invention of time and labor-saving devices such as the printing press, water pumps for draining mines and gunpowder weapons.

◉ In turn, freedom from feudal obligations and a desire to move up the social ladder encouraged many peasants to move to towns and engage in crafts and trades.

◉ The more successful ones became wealthier and constituted a new middle class.

◉ They could now afford more of the luxury goods that could be obtained only from beyond Europe's frontiers, and this stimulated both long-distance trade and the more efficient three-masted ships needed to engage in that trade.

◉ The new middle class's increasing wealth also stimulated patronage of the arts, science, literature and philosophy.

◉ The result was an explosion of cultural and intellectual creativity – what we now call the **Renaissance.**

Our present future

◉ None of this is to argue that the still-ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will have similarly earth-shattering outcomes.

◉ The mortality rate of COVID-19 is nothing like that of the plagues discussed above, and therefore the consequences may not be as seismic.

◉ In a similar fashion, COVID-19 may be accelerating an already ongoing geopolitical shift in the balance of power between the U.S. and China.

◉ During the pandemic, China has taken the global lead in providing medical assistance to other countries as part of its **"Health Silk Road" initiative.**

◉ Some argue that the combination of America's failure to lead and China's relative success at picking up the slack may well be turbo charging China's rise to a position of global leadership.

◉ Finally, COVID-19 seems to be accelerating the unraveling of long-established patterns and practices of work, with repercussions that could affect the future of office towers, big cities and mass transit, to name just a few.

◉ The implications of this and related economic developments may prove as profoundly transformative as those triggered by the **Black Death** in 1347.

◉ CONCLUSION:

◉ Ultimately, the longer-term consequences of this pandemic – like all previous pandemics – are simply unknowable to those who must endure them. But just as past plagues made the world we currently inhabit, so too will this pandemic likely remake the one populated by our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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ON THE QUAD, DEFINE THE IDEA, CHART A PATH

CONTEXT

The third round of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, comprising India, Japan, the US and Australia is to take place.
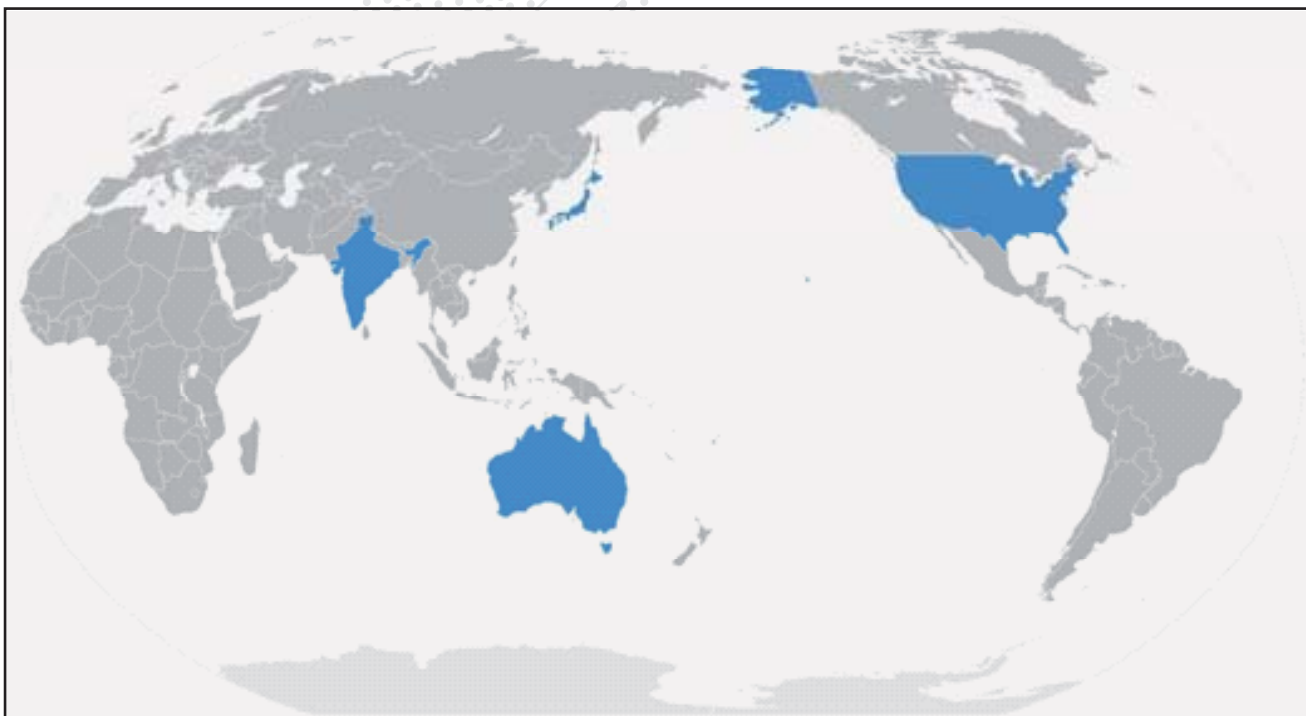
⊙ BACKGROUND:

- India, Japan, Australia and the US have been coordinating a joint approach on "free, open, prosperous and inclusive" Indo-Pacific region, based on shared values and principles and respect for international law.

- After being moribund for a decade, the Quad was revived last November, ostensibly as a hedge against the spread of China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

- The Quad's previous iteration died a quiet death when then Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd backed out due to concerns that it would antagonize China.

- This time around, it is New Delhi, which has deferred to Beijing's sensibilities.

- In April, it was alone in rejecting Australia's request to participate in the Malabar military exercises with the other Quad members. That rejection came the day after an informal summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Wuhan.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, also known as the Quad) is an informal strategic forum between-
  - ➤ The United States
  - ➤ Japan
  - ➤ Australia
  - ➤ India

- It is maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills between member countries.

- The forum was initiated as a dialogue in 2007 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, with the support of Vice President Dick Cheney of the US, Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

- The dialogue was paralleled by joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, titled Exercise Malabar.

Significance of Quad:

- **Matrix of relationship**: It's helpful to examine the Quad less as a bloc of four countries and more as a matrix of trilateral and bilateral relationships.

- **Strong engagements:** Trilaterally, **US–Japan–Australia** engagement is the most advanced, given the legacy of US alliances and the recently unveiled trilateral infrastructure agreement.

  ➤ Meanwhile, the US–India–Japan trilateral dialogue is now held at the ministerial level

  ➤ Japan has been permanently included in India–US naval exercises, and a trilateral infrastructure working group has been established

  ➤ A Japan–India–Australia trilateral dialogue was recently initiated.

- **Growing minilateralism:** Other developments point to growing 'minilateralism'. India's air force participated in Australia's Pitch Black exercise, representing a growing degree of comfort with defence cooperation in a regional context. The commonality of equipment—notably maritime patrol aircraft—is significant for improving collective maritime domain awareness and anti-submarine contingencies, and adds another element of interoperability.

- **Major defence platforms:** After more than a decade of negotiations, a logistics supply agreement and communications agreement have been signed. India has also acquired several major defence platforms from the US, and preliminary efforts at joint defence production and research and development are underway.

Quad as plurilateral mechanism

- The Chinese are skilled at obfuscation. They will, perhaps, endeavour to conflate the Quad with the Indo-Pacific vision, and link both to the so-called China Containment Theory.

- The Quad nations need to better explain that the Indo-Pacific Vision is an overarching framework that is being discussed in a transparent manner, with the objective of advancing everyone's economic and security interests.

- The Quad, on the other hand, is a plurilateral mechanism between countries that share interest on specific matters.

The forthcoming Ministerial meeting as an opportunity

- This time around, the four countries are navigating through more turbulent waters. The global pandemic and the faltering global economy are taking a toll on the region's growth and prosperity.

- The two major Pacific powers (China and America), are moving into a more adversarial phase of their relationship. Public opinion about China in all four countries is different from what it used to be in 2007.

- The fact of the meeting itself will signal to China that assertive or aggressive behaviour is not going to derail this mechanism.

- A positive agenda built around collective action in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, monitoring shipping for search and rescue or anti-piracy operations, infrastructure assistance to climatically vulnerable states, connectivity initiatives and similar activities, will re-assure the littoral States that the Quad will be a factor for regional benefit, and a far cry from Chinese allegations that it is some sort of a military alliance.

⊙ CONCLUSION:

- The forthcoming Ministerial meeting will be an opportunity to define the idea and chart a future path. Needless provocation of China should be avoided. There is no gain in actions that anger the Chinese with no commensurate benefit to the others.

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SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

INDIA'S SANDALWOOD TREES FACING THREAT FROM SANDALWOOD SPIKE DISEASE

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **India's sandalwood trees, the country's pride — particularly of Karnataka — are facing a serious threat with the return of the destructive Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD).**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

What is Sandalwood Spike Disease?

- Sandalwood Spike Disease is an infectious disease caused by **phytoplasma.**
  - ⊙ Phytoplasmas are **bacterial parasites** of plant tissues.
  - ⊙ They are transmitted by **insect vectors** and involved in **plant-to-plant transmission**.
- SSD has been one of the major causes for the decline in sandalwood production in the country for over a century.
- The disease was first reported in Kodagu in 1899.
  - ⊙ More than a million sandalwood trees were removed in the Kodagu and Mysuru region between 1903 and 1916.
  - ⊙ Later 98,734 trees were extracted during 1917-1925 in Salem also due to SSD.
- The devastating impact in natural habitats resulted in sandalwood being classified as **"vulnerable"** by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature** in 1998.

Is there any cure?

- There is no cure as of now for the infection.
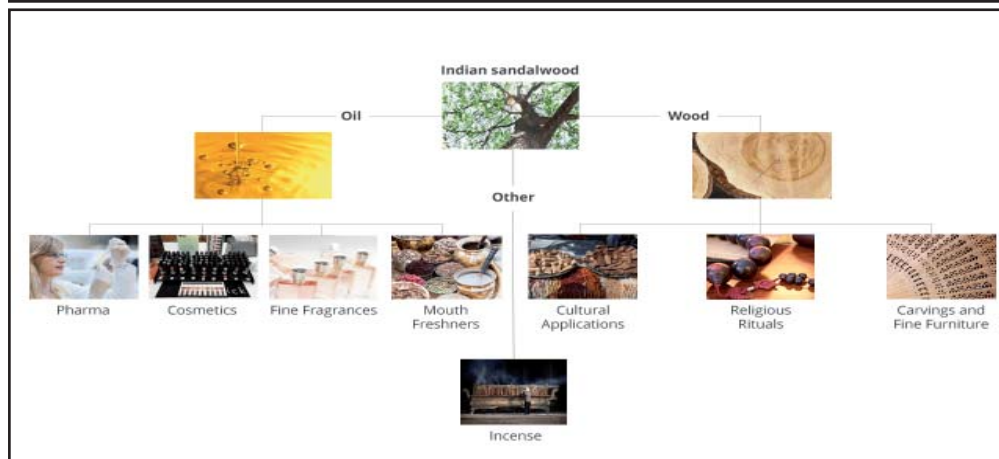- The infected tree will have to be cut down to prevent the spread of the disease.

Sandalwood distribution in India

In India, sandalwood is grown in around 9,000 sqkm, of which 8,200 sqkm is in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

State (Area-Sq. KM)	Location
Karnataka (5245)	Districts of Shimoga, Chikkamagalur, Coorg, Hassan, Mysore, Chamarajnagar, Dharwad, Bangalore, Kolar, Belgaum, Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada, Bellary and Tumkur
Tamil Nadu (3040)	Districts of Salem, Dharamapuri Erode, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, the Nilgiris, Villupuram and to a certain extent in Madurai, Virudhunagar and Tirunelveli
Kerala (15)	Marayoor Range and to a limited extent in Arienkavu Range
Andhra Pradesh (200)	Anantapur, Chitoor and Kadapa, Tirumala Hills and Paderu Forest Division of Arakku valley
Odisha (25)	Jeypore and Rayagada forest divisions of Komput district
Madhya Pradesh (33)	Forests of Seoni, Sagar, Sehore, Mandsaur, Dewas, Guna and Rewa forest divisions

Maharashtra (33)	Ahmednagar, Latur, Buldana, Washim, Amravati, Osmanabad, Beed, Pune and Satara
Rajasthan (sparse)	Udaipur, Rajsamand, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Pali, Sirohi, Banswara, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Ajmer and Karoli forest divisions

- India has been the traditional leader of sandalwood oil production for perfumery and pharmaceuticals.
- As early as 1792, Tippu Sultan had declared it a 'Royal Tree' of Mysuru.
- The price of Indian sandalwood and its oil has risen significantly since 1995 at a rate of 20% annually mainly due to depletion in production.
- The much-loved and much-valued tree now faces a threat to its existence from SSD.

DOMESTIC SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT INSURERS (D-SIIs)

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC) and The New India Assurance Co have been identified as Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs) for 2020-21 by insurance regulator IRDAI.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

What are D-SIIs?

- D-SIIs refer to insurers of such size, market importance and domestic and global inter-connectedness whose distress or failure would cause a significant dislocation in the domestic financial system.
- D-SIIs are perceived as insurers that are 'too big or too important to fail'. This perception and the perceived expectation of government support will amplify risk taking, reduce market discipline, create competitive distortions, and increase the possibility of distress in the future.

Methodology for identification & supervision of D-SIIs

- In order to identify too-big-to-fail insurers and to put such insurers to enhanced monitoring mechanism, IRDAI has developed a methodology for identification and supervision of D-SIIs.
- The parameters include-

> ➤ the size of operations in terms of total revenue, including premium underwritten and the value of assets under management
>
> ➤ global activities across more than one jurisdiction
>
> ➤ lack of substitutability of their products and/or operations

- The continued functioning of D-SIIs is critical for the uninterrupted availability of insurance services to the national economy.

The new D-SIIs

- **Largest insurer:** LIC is the largest insurer in the country with a balance sheet of Rs 31.2 lakh crore.

- **Sole reinsurer:** GIC Re is the country's sole reinsurer.

- **Largest general insurance company:** New India is the country's largest general insurance company.

GIC Re and New India are listed insurers while LIC is in the process of listing on the stock exchanges through a disinvestment by the government. All three entities are owned by the government.

About IRDAI

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) has been set up as autonomous body under the IRDA Act, 1999.

- IRDAI regulates the Indian insurance industry to protect the interests of the policyholders and work for the orderly growth of the industry.

- **IRDAI's Mission:** To protect the interests of policyholders, to regulate, promote and ensure orderly growth of the insurance industry and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

What will they do as 'D-SIIs'?

- **Raise the level of corporate governance:** As D-SIIs, the three insurers LIC, GIC Re and New India have been asked to raise the level of corporate governance.

- **Identify risk & promote management culture**: These insurers also have to identify all relevant risk and promote a sound risk management culture.

- **Enhance regulatory supervision:** These D-SIIs will also be subjected to enhanced regulatory supervision during this period.

HEALTH IN INDIA: MoSPI

- ◉ **CONTEXT:**
  - **The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the report of a survey titled 'Health in India', whose main objective was to gather basic quantitative information on India's health sector.**

- ◉ **BACKGROUND:**
  - The report is released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

  - It details aspects of the role played by government and private sector facilities.

  - It also contains health information for separate religious communities, including estimates of their susceptibility to ailments.

  - The report is based on information collected through N**SS Schedule 25.0 (Household Social Consumption: Health)** spread over the entire Indian Union.

- Data were collected through a sample survey of 1.13 lakh households covering 5.55 lakh persons.

How 'healthy' is India?

- Around 7.5 percent of Indians reported that they were suffering from ailments.
- The difference in people suffering from ailments in rural and urban India was stark.
  - **rural India**- 6.8 per cent
  - **urban India**- 9.1 per cent

Which religious group is the most prone to illness?

- The **Zoroastrian community** remains the most susceptible to ailments.
- This number for other communities is:
  - **Jains**- 11.2 per cent
  - **Sikhs**- 11 per cent
  - **Christians**- 10.5 per cent
  - **Muslims**- 8.1 per cent
  - **Buddhists**- 8 per cent
  - **Hindus**- 7.2 per cent

What is Ailment?

- The survey defines ailment as any **deviation from a person's state of physical and mental well-being.**
- The '**Proportion of Persons who Responded as Ailing' or PPRA**, in a 15-day period when they were approached by the surveyors, were registered as those suffering from ailments.

Division in terms of sex

Religion	Male	Female	Person
Hindu	65	79	72
Muslim	70	93	81
Christian	89	122	105
Sikh	94	127	110
Jain	109	115	112
Buddhist	45	113	80
Zoroastrian	257	359	311
Others	83	54	69
All	67	83	75

- Women remain more susceptible to suffering from ailments than men.
  - In rural India 6.1 per cent of males said that they were suffering from ailments, while 7.6 per cent of rural women said the same.

◎ While 8.2 per cent of urban males said that they were sick, 10 per cent urban females said the same

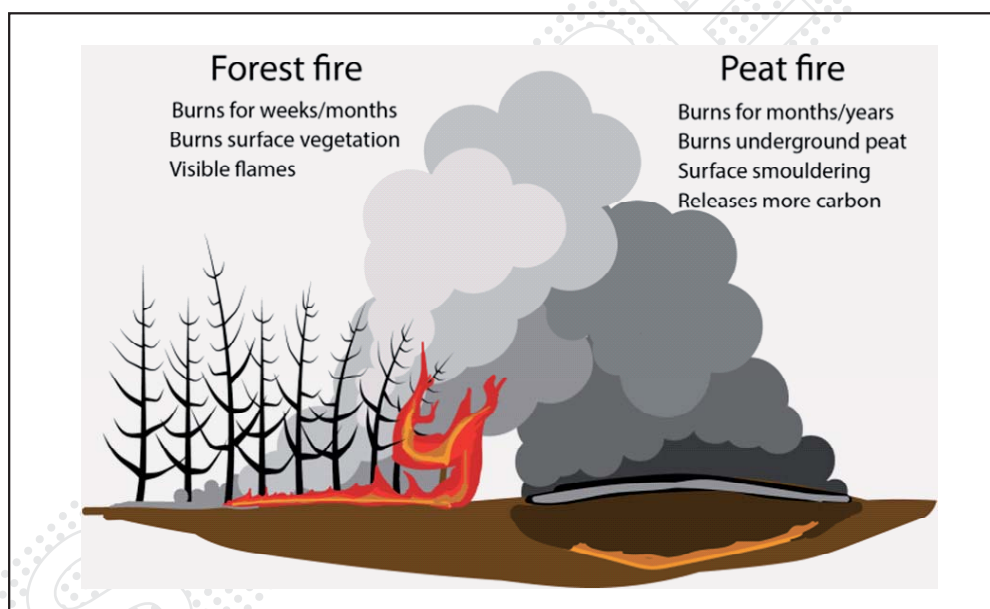# 'ZOMBIE FIRES' DISC OVERED IN ARCTIC AS CLIMATE CHANGE INTRODUCES NEW FUEL

◉ **CONTEXT:**

• **Fire scientists are warning of 'zombie fires', or holdover fires, in the Arctic, an area not known for large fires or substantial fire fuel.**

◉ **ABOUT:**

What are Zombie fires?

• Zombie fires occur when a fire from a previous year smolders in **carbon-rich peat (organic fuel)** underground during the winter, then re-ignite on the surface as the weather warms and the ground thaws the next season.

• This can lead to even more burning the following year.

• The process is made worse as peat and permafrost, both carbon *sinks* which act to hold and store carbon, now become a carbon *source*.

• Emissions increase as both the burning of vegetation *and* burning of peat/permafrost release CO_2 into the atmosphere, furthering our planet's warming.

Why is a 'zombie fire' dangerous?

• Zombie fires are part of a dangerous "feedback loop".

• The growing number of extreme wildfires in the Arctic are unprecedented in the past 10,000 years.

• These fires can burn underground for years, thawing permafrost and releasing huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, creating feedback loops resulting in accelerated warming and more thawing permafrost.

• The combination of wildfires and permafrost thaw can cause loss of life, landslides, floods, and coastal erosion threatening Arctic communities, infrastructure and wildlife.

What needs to be done?

- **Proper understanding:** There is need to understand the nature of fires in the Arctic which are evolving and changing rapidly.

- **International cooperation:** There is also an urgent need for global cooperation, investment and action in monitoring fires.

- **Traditional learning:** The study called for learning from the indigenous peoples of the Arctic about how fire was traditional used.

- **New approaches:** New permafrost- and peat-sensitive approaches to wildland fire fighting are needed to save the Arctic.

MAHARASHTRA MODIFIED FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006

⊙ **CONTEXT:**

- **In order to bring a major relief to forest-dwelling families, Maharashtra Government has modified the Forest Rights Act, 2006 that will enable forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwelling families to build houses in the neighborhood forest areas.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

Scheduled Areas in India

- As per the Constitutional provision under **Article 244 (1)** of the Constitution of India, the 'Scheduled Areas' are defined as **'such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas'** – as per **paragraph 6(1)** of the **Fifth Schedule** of the Constitution of India.

- At present, Scheduled Areas have been declared in the States of Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana), Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.

- Criteria for declaring Scheduled Area

  ◉ The criteria for declaring any area as a "Scheduled Area" under the Fifth Schedule are:

  ◉ Preponderance of tribal population,

  ◉ Compactness and reasonable size of the area,

  ◉ A viable administrative entity such as a district, block or taluk, and

  ◉ Economic backwardness of the area as compared to the neighbouring areas.

Schedule 5th of the Constitution

- The current notification has been issued by the Governor using his powers under subparagraph (1) of paragraph 5 of the **Schedule V** of the Constitution.

- The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas as well as of Scheduled Tribes residing in any State other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

- The Governor of each State having Scheduled Areas (SA) shall annually, or whenever so required by the President, make a report to the President regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas in that State.

Significance of the step

- The amendment will importantly prevent the migration of forest dwelling families outside the native villages and provide them with housing areas by extending the village site into forest land in their neighbourhood.

- It is likely to provide a major relief to STs and other traditional forest-dwelling families living in the scheduled areas of the state.

ICMR WARNS INDIA OF 'CAT QUE VIRUS

◉ **CONTEXT:**
- **Even as the world is still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) scientists have found another virus, the 'Cat Que Virus,' reported mainly in China.**

◉ **ABOUT:**

What is Cat Que Virus?

- CQV belongs to the **Simbu serogroup** and infects both humans and economically important livestock species.
- One of the arthropod-borne viruses (arboviruses), the CQV may cause febrile illnesses, meningitis, and paediatric encephalitis among humans.
- **Natural host:** Its natural host is a mosquito. Domestic pigs are the primary mammalian host of CQV and anti-CQV IgM and IgG antibodies have been reported in swine reared locally in China.

Antibodies against the virus

- Antibodies against the virus have been reported in swine reared locally in China.
- It indicates that the virus has formed a "natural cycle" in the local area and has the ability to spread in pigs and other animal populations through mosquitoes.

Why India is in danger?

- The virus has been spotted in culex mosquitoes and pigs across China and Vietnam. India, too is home to species of culex mosquitoes.
- According to the ICMR study, Indian mosquitoes are susceptible to CQV, which could also become a public health pathogen.

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN FIGHT OVER DISPUTED NAGORNO-KARABAKH

◉ **CONTEXT:**
- **One of the world's oldest conflicts, a territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, has re-erupted with the heaviest clashes in years.**

◉ **ABOUT:**

What is Nagorno-Karabakh region?

- Nagorno-Karabakh is the subject of an unresolved dispute between Azerbaijan, in which it lies, and its ethnic Armenian majority, backed by neighbouring Armenia.

- A mountainous region of about 4,400 sq km (1,700 sq miles)
- Traditionally inhabited by Christian Armenians and Muslim Turks.
- In Soviet times, it became an autonomous region within the republic of Azerbaijan
- Internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, but majority of population is ethnic Armenian

- An estimated one million people displaced by 1990s war, and about 30,000 killed
- Separatist forces captured some extra territory around the enclave in Azerbaijan in the 1990s war
- Stalemate has largely prevailed since a 1994 ceasefire
- Russia has traditionally been seen as an ally of the Armenians

The Conflict

- Since 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been at odds over Nagorno-Karabakh.
- The land is an ethnic Arminian enclave with Azerbaijan and it lies approximately 50 kilometres from the Armenian border.
- The region has been out of control of Azerbaijan since the end of the war in 1994, however, both the sides have a heavy military presence along a demilitarized zone separating the region from the rest of the country.
- Additionally, local soldiers backed by Armenia also occupy some Azerbaijani territory outside the region.

Role of Russia and Turkey

- Russia and Turkey are two key players.

Turkey with Azerbaijan

- Turkey, which wants to play a key role in the Caucasus' affairs, has extended its support to oil-rich and Turkic-speaking country, Azerbaijan.
- During World War I, roughly 1.5 million Armenians were massacred by Turkey under the Ottoman Empire. Some scholars call the mass killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as the first genocide of the 20th century.
- Turkey, however, denies the charge and refuses to recognise World War I killings of Armenians as genocide.
- Due to Turkey's denial, the ties between Yerevan and Ankara are very cold.

Russia with Armenia

- Russia shares close ties with Armenia.
- Russia also leads the **Collective Security Treaty Organization**, the military alliance of former Soviet states that includes Armenia.
- A look at the ties between the two countries suggests that Russia needs Armenia as much as Armenia needs Russia.
  - Azerbaijan's spending on arms exceeds Armenia's defence budget, making Yerevan dependent on Russia's support and military guarantees.
  - The geopolitical and strategic importance of Azerbaijan pulls Russia's attention to the country (Armenia).
  - In order to keep [its former republic] in its orbit, Russia appears to chasten Azerbaijan with Armenia.

PAKISTAN TO ELEVATE GILGIT-BALTISTAN TO FULL-FLEDGED PROVINCE WITH ALL CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

◉ **CONTEXT:**
- **Pakistan has decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan's status to that of a full-fledged province.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**
- The region was part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and is claimed by India.
- Gilgit-Baltistan is located between Karakoram and Himalayas world's highest mountains. It's home to K-2, the second tallest mountain in the world.
- During the first Indo-Pak war of October 1947, Pakistan occupied 78,114 sq km of the land of Jammu and Kashmir, including the 'Northern Areas'.
    ◉ The Northern Areas is the other name of Gilgit-Baltistan that Pakistan has used for administrative reasons because it was a disputed territory.

Governance of the Region

- The political nature of Gilgit-Baltistan has been directionless from the beginning.
- Pakistan initially governed the region directly from the central authority after it was separated from 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' on April 28, 1949.
- In 1963, Pakistan gave away 5,180 sq km of the region to China, despite local protests.
- Pakistan passed the **Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order** in 2009, which granted "self-rule" to the 'Northern Areas'.
- Pakistan signed an agreement with China for mega infrastructure and hydel power projects in September 2009.
- In 2019, a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan took up the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan.
- Over the years, the region has acquired a government and a council, which gave it a de facto status of a province of Pakistan, but the constitutional status of the region remained vague without explicit statehood.

What's India's take on the issue?

- India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.
- India has said the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no **locus standi** on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.
- India completely rejects such actions and continued attempts to bring material changes in Pakistan occupied areas of the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Instead, Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation.

MCI DISSOLVED, NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION COMES INTO EXISTENCE

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **The National Medical Commission (NMC) came into existence, as the Centre dissolved the six-decade-old Indian Medical Council Act 1956.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**
- The National Medical Commission has been set up as the country's apex regulator of medical education and profession.
- **Composition:** Dr Suresh Chandra Sharma, retired HoD, ENT, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, has been appointed as the Chairman of the NMC for a period of three years
    ◉ Apart from the Chairman, the NMC will consist of 10 ex-officio members and 22 part-time members appointed by the Central government.

Modalities for Exit Test to be worked out

- National Exit Test, once finalised, will serve as PG entrance even to institutes of national importance like AIIMS, PGI & JIPMER
- The NMC is now set to draft the uniform national pattern for MBBS final-year exams to ensure the same level of skills in MBBS graduates all over India
- Plans afoot to scrap existing system of annual renewal permissions for institutes

Autonomous Boards

- The Centre has formed four autonomous boards under the NMC Act---
  - Under-Graduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB)
  - Post-Graduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB)
  - Medical Assessment and Rating Board
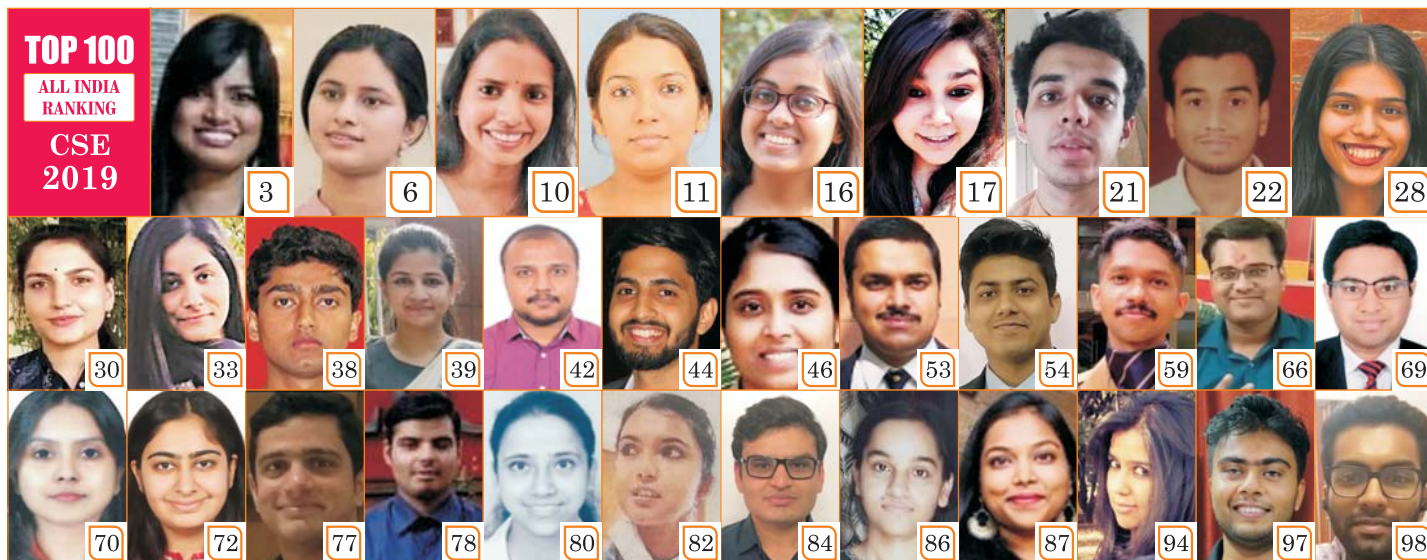 - Ethics and Medical Registration Board

Functions of NMC:

- To lay down policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals.
- To assess the requirements of human resources and infrastructure in healthcare.
- To ensure compliance by the State Medical Councils with the regulations made under the Bill.
- To frame guidelines for determination of fee for up to 50% of the seats in the private medical institutions.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- In 2018, it was decided that the MCI will be dissolved and a new body will take its place, after which the National Medical Commission Act, 2019 was passed in August 2019.
- The change was aimed at bringing in reforms in medical education towards a transparent, qualitative and accountable system.
- The basic change is that the regulator is now 'selected' on merit, as opposed to an 'elected' regulator.
- The government dissolved the MCI in 2018, replaced it with a BoG, which was chaired by Dr. VK Paul, member (health), NITI Aayog.

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