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INTER-SERVICES ORGANISATIONS (ISOS) (COMMAND, CONTROL, AND DISCIPLINE) ACT

Context

- The Government has notified the **Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) (Command, Control, and Discipline) Act** to be enforced from May 10, 2024.

About

- In order to **bolster effective command, control and efficient functioning** of Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs), the bill was passed by both the Houses of Parliament during the **Monsoon Session of 2023.**
- **Inter-services organisations include** soldiers from the Army, the Air Force and the Navy, like joint training institutes National Defence Academy, National Defence College (NDC), Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), and the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC).

Key Provisions

- **Inter-services Organisation:** Existing Inter-services Organisations will be deemed to have been constituted under the Act.
  - The central government may constitute an Inter-services Organisation which has personnel belonging to at least two of the three services: the army, the navy, and the air force.
- **Control of Inter-services Organisations:** It empowers the Commander-in-Chief or the Officer-in-Command of an Inter-services Organisation to exercise command and control over the personnel serving in or attached to it.
  - He would be responsible for maintaining discipline and ensuring proper discharge of duties by the service personnel.
  - The supervision of an Inter-services Organisation will be vested in the central government.
- **Commander-in-Chief:** The officers eligible to be appointed as the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command are:
  - a General Officer of the regular Army (above the rank of Brigadier),
  - a Flag Officer of the Navy (rank of Admiral of the Fleet, Admiral, Vice-Admiral, or Rear-Admiral), or an Air Officer of the Air Force (above the rank of group captain).
- **Commanding Officer:** The Act provides for a Commanding Officer who will be in command of a unit, ship, or establishment.
  - The officer will also perform duties assigned by the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of the Inter-services Organisation.
  - The Commanding Officer will be empowered to initiate all disciplinary or administrative actions over the personnel appointed, deputed, posted, or attached to that Inter-services Organisation.

Need for the Act

- **Theaterisation:** The development comes amid a renewed push for theaterisation, a long-awaited military reform for the best use of the military's resources to fight future wars.
- **Challenges in Present Framework:** At present, armed forces personnel are governed by the provisions of three separate laws for the three services — the Air Force Act, 1950, the Army Act, 1950, and the Navy Act, 1957.
  - Only an officer of the same service holds disciplinary powers over persons governed by the respective Act.
  - The lack of such powers had a direct impact on command, control and discipline.
- **Financial Cost:** The existing framework is time-consuming and involves financial costs to move the personnel.
  - The proposed legislation aims to address these impediments to ensure discipline is maintained and targets faster disposal of cases, which in turn is likely to save time and public money.

Significance

- With the notification, the Act will empower the heads of ISOs and pave the way for expeditious disposal of cases, avoid multiple proceedings and will be a step towards greater integration and jointness among the armed forces personnel.
- It is imperative to safeguarding national interests in today's complex security landscape.

Source: TH

SUPREME COURT ORDER FOR ARAVALLIS RANGE

In Context

- The Supreme Court has prohibited Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi from granting new mining leases and renewals in the vulnerable ecosystem of the Aravallis.

About Aravallis

- "**Aravalli**" is a Sanskrit word which can be broken down into Ara and Valli which translate to the "line of peaks".
- The Aravallis are one of the oldest landforms on the Earth (dating back 350 million years).
- It is the oldest mountain range in India.
- They stretch across four states **(Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat)**
  - The highest point is in the Mount Abu called Gurushikhar
- It is characterised by rugged hills, rocky outcrops, and sparse vegetation, and it plays a crucial role in the region's ecology and hydrology.

Importance

- **Natural barrier**: Aravalli is the geographical feature that stops dry winds from coming to the Gangetic Plains — dry winds that come from Afghanistan and Pakistan.
  - Therefore it acts as a natural barrier against desertification, and helps regulate the climate.
- **Biodiversity hotspot:** the Aravallis are home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna. The range supports a variety of ecosystems, including dry deciduous forests, scrublands, grasslands, and wetlands, providing habitat for numerous species of plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects.
- **Water catchment area:** The Aravalli Range acts as a crucial water catchment area for the region, serving as a source of rivers, lakes, and groundwater recharge.
- **Cultural heritage:** The Aravalli Range is steeped in history and cultural significance, with numerous archaeological sites, temples, and forts dotting its landscape. Ancient civilisations have left their mark on the region, with relics and ruins dating back thousands of years.
- **Tourism hub:** Several famous tourist destinations are nestled within the Aravalli Range, showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes, and ancient history.
- **Breathtaking scenery:** The Aravallis are renowned for their breathtaking natural beauty, characterised by rugged hills, deep valleys, and panoramic vistas.

Threats

- **Illegal mining** and real estate continue to threaten the biodiversity of the Aravalli hill range in north-western India.
  - illegal activities persist due to the connivance of unscrupulous elements and administrative authorities.
- Urbanisation, posing a threat to the flora and fauna of one of the world's oldest mountain ranges.

Way Ahead

- There is a need for a balance between protecting the environment and the livelihood of the people engaged in mining activities,
- The issue related to mining activities in the Aravalli Hills needs to be jointly addressed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change as well as all the four states.

Source: TH

USE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN EARLY STAGES OF EDUCATION

Context

- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has instructed all its schools to make use of educational material which will focus on learning in one's mother tongue and encourage multilingual education.

Constitutional Provisions/ Laws

- **Under Article 350A** of the Constitution, the government must try to ensure that children from linguistic minority groups are educated in their mother tongue.
- **Article 29(1)** states Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- **Section 29(f) of Chapter V** under **Right to Education Act, 2009** states that, "medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child's mother tongue."

Importance of mother tongue in children development

- Early education in the mother tongue could serve as a crucial factor in learning new languages, fostering understanding, confidence and a love for learning.
- It enables a **deeper grasp of concepts**, **encourages critical thinking** and strengthens cultural connections.
- India is incredibly diverse linguistically, with hundreds of languages spoken across the country. Children learning in their mother tongue, **preserve their cultural heritage** and contribute to its continuation for future generations.
- Language plays a significant role in **social integration**. Children educated in their mother tongue, facilitates better communication within their community and strengthens social bonds.

Steps taken by government

- **The Jharkhand government and UNICEF** initiated a pilot programme for multilingual education in 259 schools.
  - It involved the development of resources and content in the **Ho, Mundari, Khariya, Santali and Kurukh** languages spoken by Tribals.
- **Odisha's government, with UNICEF,** created 'Nua Arunima,' (New Horizons) a mother tongue-based early childhood education curriculum available in 21 languages.
- **The National Education Policy 2020** focuses on multilingualism and the use of familiar language for learning until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond.
  - The policy recommends preparing textbooks and related reading material in home languages and asks teachers to use them for communication in the classroom.
- **The NIPUN Bharat Mission:** The Mission Implementation Guidelines suggests that the teaching learning process and development of teaching learning material should be done in mother tongue.

Way Ahead

- In India, a multilingual educational approach that uses familiar languages as a foundation could deliver positive outcomes.
- Effective implementation on the ground requires sustained efforts from diverse stakeholders.
- Empowering teachers through multilingual training, developing mother tongue-based learning materials that are engaging, and supporting local communities in the advocacy of their languages are all crucial steps.

Source: TH

GLOBAL REPORT ON NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES 2024

Context

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has released its 'Global report on neglected tropical diseases 2024'.

Key highlights

- In **2022, 1.62 billion** people required interventions against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).
- As of end 2022, the number of reported deaths from vector-borne NTDs has increased by **22%** (as compared with 2016).
- **In 2023, noma (**cancrum Oris, gangrenous stomatitis) was added to the list of NTDs.
- Access to water supply, sanitation and hygiene is overall **85.8%** in NTD-endemic countries and 63% among the population requiring interventions against NTDs.
- The share of the population at risk protected against catastrophic out-of-pocket health expenditure due to NTDs is **87.4%.**

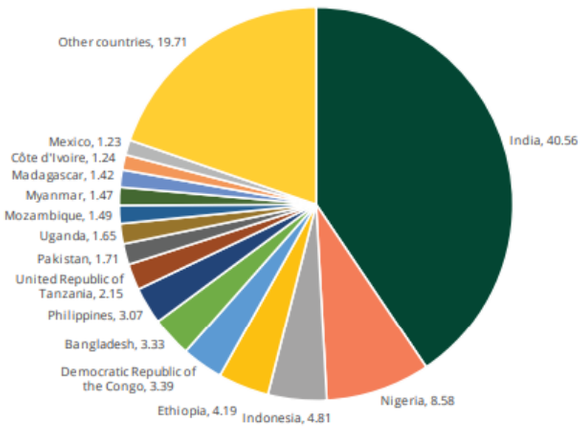
Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)

- **Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)** are a diverse group of conditions caused by a variety of pathogens (including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins) and associated with devastating health, social and economic consequences.
- These diseases are often associated with **poverty, limited access to healthcare,** and **inadequate sanitation and hygiene.**
- They are common in low-income populations in developing regions of **Africa, Asia, and the Americas.**
- The term "neglected" highlights the fact that these **diseases historically receive less attention** and funding for research and development.
- **NTDs include:** Dengue and chikungunya; dracunculiasis; echinococcosis; foodborne trematodiases; leishmaniasis; leprosy; lymphatic filariasis; noma; onchocerciasis; rabies; soil-transmitted helminthiases; snakebite envenoming; trachoma; and yaws etc.

Indian Scenario

- India has the world's largest absolute burden of at least 10 major NTDs — hookworm, dengue, lymphatic filariasis, leprosy, kala-azar and rabies, ascariasis, trichuriasis, trachoma and cysticercosis.

Fig. 2.2. Proportion (%) of people requiring interventions against NTDs, by country, 2022



Government Initiatives

- **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP):** It conducts mass drug administration campaigns, distributes bed nets, and promotes vector control measures to prevent diseases like lymphatic filariasis, malaria, dengue, and kala-azar.
- **National Health Mission (NHM):** The NHM aims to provide accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare to urban and rural populations, including those affected by NTDs.
- **Kala-azar Elimination Programme:** Government of India launched a centrally sponsored Kala-azar control Programme in 1990-91. The National Health Policy (2002) envisaged kala-azar Elimination by 2010 which was revised later to 2015.
  - Now Kala-azar is targeted for elimination by 2023 though WHO NTD RoadMap goal is 2030.
- **Lymphatic Filariasis Elimination Programme:** India has been actively involved in the Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GPELF).
- **National Deworming Day (NDD):** Launched in 2015, NDD is a nationwide program aimed at reducing the prevalence of soil-transmitted helminthiasis among children.

The NTD road map for 2021-2030

- The road map **sets global targets and milestones to prevent, control, eliminate or eradicate 20 diseases** and disease groups as well as cross-cutting targets aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The overarching 2030 global targets include;
  - A **90%** reduction in the number of people requiring treatment for NTDs;
  - A **75%** reduction in DALYs related to NTDs;
  - At least **100** countries eliminating at least one NTD; and
  - The eradication of two diseases (dracunculiasis and yaws).

Challenges

- **Inadequate capacity for surveillance and case detection**, resulting in under-diagnosis and under-reporting of NTDs – which in turn affects strategic decision-making.
- NTDs are associated with **social stigma and discrimination**, leading to delays in seeking care and hindering efforts to control transmission.
- They have c**omplex transmission cycles** involving vectors (such as mosquitoes or snails) or animal reservoirs, making them difficult to control.
- NTDs have historically received **less attention and funding for research and development** compared to other diseases. This leads to gaps in knowledge about disease biology, transmission dynamics, and effective interventions.

Way Forward

- Efforts to combat NTDs are crucial for achieving broader global health goals and development agendas.
- NTD programs provide essential interventions to reach populations that are otherwise challenging to access, serving as a vital entry point to healthcare systems for many communities.
- Prioritizing NTD control, elimination, and eradication efforts is integral to promoting equity in healthcare delivery and achieving universal health coverage.

Source: WHO

WORLD'S LARGEST FACILITY DESIGNED TO REMOVE CO2 FROM ATMOSPHERE

Context

- The **World's largest facility** designed **to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere** started operations in **Iceland**.

About

- It is named **Mammoth** and it is the second commercial direct air capture (DAC) facility in the nation and is significantly larger than its predecessor, **Orca**, which began in **2021**.
- It is situated on a dormant volcano in Iceland and 50 kilometres from an active volcano.
- The facility **draws in air and chemically extracts captured carbon** by turning it into stone beneath the earth's surface, utilizing **Iceland's abundant geothermal energy to power the process.**
- It aims to remove **36,000 tons of carbon annually**— equivalent to removing about 7,800 gas-powered cars from the road each year.

Direct Air Capture (DAC) Facility

- DAC technologies **extract CO2 directly from the atmosphere** at any location, unlike carbon capture which is generally carried out at the point of emissions, such as a steel plant.
  - The CO2 can be permanently stored in **deep geological formations** or used for a variety of applications.
- To date, **27 DAC plants** have been commissioned in **Europe, North America, Japan and the Middle East** capturing almost **0.01 Mt CO2/year.**

Concerns of Direct Air Capture (DAC) Facility

- **Energy Requirements:** DAC facilities require significant amounts of energy to operate, which could potentially exacerbate rather than alleviate carbon emissions if the energy source is not renewable or low-carbon.
- **Cost:** Building and operating DAC facilities is expensive, especially at scale.
- **Scalability:** While DAC technology shows promise, its scalability remains uncertain.
  - It's unclear whether DAC can be scaled up sufficiently to make a meaningful impact on global carbon dioxide levels and climate change mitigation efforts.
- **Diversion from Natural Solutions:** Some argue that investing in DAC technology may divert attention and resources away from natural climate solutions like reforestation.

Carbon Capture Technologies

- **The technologies can be broadly categorized into three main types:** pre-combustion capture, post-combustion capture, and oxy-fuel combustion.
- **Pre-Combustion Capture:**
  - **Gasification:** Involves converting carbon-containing feedstock, such as coal or biomass, into a synthesis gas (syngas) composed primarily of carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrogen (H2). The CO2 can then be separated from the syngas before combustion.
  - **Chemical Looping Gasification:** Utilizes metal oxide particles to indirectly convert carbon-containing fuel into syngas. The metal oxide captures the carbon from the fuel, and then the CO2 can be separated from the metal oxide.
  - **Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC):** Integrates gasification technology with a combined cycle power plant, allowing for efficient power generation while capturing CO2 before combustion.
- **Post-Combustion Capture:**
  - **Amine Scrubbing:** Involves passing the flue gas from combustion through a liquid solvent, typically an amine solution, which absorbs CO2. The CO2-rich solvent is then heated to release the captured CO2 for storage or utilization.
  - **Membrane Separation:** Uses selective membranes to separate CO2 from other gases in the flue gas based on differences in permeability. **Adsorption:** Utilizes solid materials, such as activated carbon or zeolites, to adsorb CO2 from the flue gas. The adsorbent is then regenerated by desorbing the CO2, allowing for multiple cycles of capture and release.
- **Oxy-Fuel Combustion:**
  - Involves burning fossil fuels in oxygen instead of air to produce a flue gas consisting mainly of CO2 and water vapor.
  - The CO2 can then be easily separated from the water vapor and other impurities, resulting in a concentrated stream of CO2 for storage or utilization.

Emerging DAC technologies

- **Electro swing adsorption (ESA)-DAC** is based on an electrochemical cell where a solid electrode absorbs CO_2 when negatively charged and releases it when a positive charge is applied.
  - It is currently being developed in the United States and United Kingdom.
- **Zeolites** are now being adopted for DAC due to their porous structure suitable for CO_2 adsorption.
  - The first operational DAC plant relying on zeolites was commissioned in 2022 in Norway, with plans to scale the technology up to 2 000 tCO_2/year by 2025.
- **Passive DAC** relies on accelerating the natural process that transforms calcium hydroxide and atmospheric CO_2 into limestone.
  - This process is being engineered in the United States by a company using renewably powered kilns to separate CO_2 from limestone.

Way Ahead

- Current global carbon removal efforts are capable of handling only about **0.01 million metric tons per year,** far from the 70 million tons per year by 2030 to meet climate targets.
- With larger DAC plants under construction and more ambitious plans for future facilities, there is hope that **significant progress** can be made in combating climate change.
- **Innovation in CO_2 use opportunities,** including synthetic fuels, could drive down costs and provide a market for DAC.
- Early commercial efforts to develop synthetic aviation fuels using air-captured CO_2 and hydrogen have started, reflecting the important role that these fuels could play in the sector.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

INTERIM BAIL

Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India granted Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal **interim bail** in the liquor policy case till June 1, 2024.

About Interim Bail

- It is a **temporary bail** granted for a **shorter time period** during which the court can call the documents to make a final decision on the regular or anticipatory bail application.
- It is granted **based on the individual facts of each case**.
- In bailable offences, bail is a right and not a favour according to ***Section 436 of CrPC.***
  - However, in the case of **non-bailable offences**, the grant of bail, ***including interim bail***, is at the **discretion of the court** and is based on several factors including the gravity of the offence, the character of the accused, the likelihood of the accused absconding, etc.

Bail Provisions in India

- The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973 governs the terms of the 'Bail in India'.
- Though the Act **does not define 'bail'**, it expressly mentions phrases ***'bailable offence'*** **and** ***'non-bailable offence'.***

Other Types of Bail

- **Regular Bail:** A regular bail is basically the release of an accused from custody to ensure his presence at the trial.
- **Anticipatory Bail:** It is a type of bail that is given to someone who is in anticipation of getting arrested for a non-bailable offence by the police.

Source: TH

VICTORY DAY OF RUSSIA

Context

- Every year, Russia celebrates Victory Day on **May 9** to commemorate the **Soviet Union's victory over Germany's Nazi forces in World War II.**

About

- **Background:** The erstwhile Soviet Union first celebrated Victory Day on **May 9, 1945,** after Germany signed the Instrument of Surrender.
  - At the end of World War II in 1945, the Allied Powers declared May 8 as Victory in Europe Day. The USSR, however, wanted to wait till the official document was signed by German authorities in Soviet-controlled Berlin.
  - By the time the document was signed, it was already past midnight in Moscow. Russia, therefore, celebrates Victory Day on May 9.
- **Celebration:** The Russian military holds a parade at Moscow's Red Square and in other cities to mark the event.

- An elaborate ceremony also takes place at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a memorial in Moscow dedicated to Soviet soldiers who died during the war.

Source: TH

KAMIKAZE DRONE

Context

- The utilization of the **Lancet Kamikaze drone by Russia and the** ongoing conflict in Ukraine underscores the intricate global supply chain challenges.

About

- A kamikaze drone, also known as a **suicide drone or loitering munition,** is an **unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)** that is designed to carry out a **single-use mission** by crashing into its target.
- Unlike traditional drones that may return to base after completing their mission or be recovered for future use, kamikaze drones are typically **equipped with explosives and are intended to inflict damage upon impact.**
- These drones are often used in military operations for tasks such as reconnaissance, surveillance, and precision strikes against enemy targets.
- They offer several advantages, including their ability to be launched from a variety of platforms, their relatively low cost compared to manned aircraft, and their ability to engage targets with precision and minimal collateral damage.

Source: TOI

OLEANDER

In News

- Two Kerala government-controlled temple boards have banned **use of oleander flowers** in temple offerings after a 24-year old woman died after accidentally chewing some **oleander leaves.**

Oleander Plant

- Nerium oleander, commonly known as **oleander,** is highly toxic due to the presence of **cardiac glycosides** in all parts of the plant, including leaves, stems, flowers, and roots.
- Symptoms of **oleander toxicity** include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, irregular heart rate, and in severe cases, death. Poisoning can occur through ingestion, inhalation of smoke from burning the plant, or skin contact.
- Despite its danger, oleander remains popular in landscapes for its attractive flowers and drought resistance.

Utility

- The Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India acknowledges the traditional u**tilization of certain components of the oleander plant** in Ayurveda for managing diverse skin conditions and in crafting various remedies. Historical records detail its efficacy in addressing persistent skin ailments and other health issues. Nonetheless, healthcare professionals caution against its unmonitored usage due to its narrow therapeutic range and considerable toxicity.

Do you know ?

- Cardiac glycosides are steroidal compounds capable of exerting pharmacological effects on cardiac muscle. The primary therapeutic value of these glycosides lies in their ability to exert profound tonic effects on the heart [stronger and faster heart contractions],.

Source:IE

OVERSEAS CITIZENSHIP OF INDIA (OCI)

Context

- Recently, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) revised its circular that had been expected to pave the way for people from **erstwhile Portuguese territories in India (Goa, Daman and Diu)** to apply for an **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card**.

About the Overseas Citizenship of India

- It is a form of dual citizenship that was introduced by the Indian government in 2005.
- It was introduced in response to persistent demands for dual citizenship, particularly from the Indian diaspora in North America and other developed countries.

Eligibility Criteria

- It provides for **registration as an OCI of all Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)** who were citizens of India on 26th January, 1950, or thereafter, or were eligible to become citizens of India on 26th January, 1950.
- A foreign national who:

- Belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15th August, 1947; or
- A child or a grandchild or a great grandchild of such a citizen; or
- A minor child of such persons mentioned above; or
- A minor child whose both parents are citizens of India or one of the parents is a citizen of India is eligible for registration as OCI cardholder.

- However, **no person**, who or either of whose parents or grandparents or great grandparents is or had been a citizen of **Pakistan, Bangladesh or such other country** as the Central Government may, by notification in the **Official Gazette,** specify, shall be eligible for registration as an OCI Cardholder.

Benefits of OCI

- A registered OCI is granted **multiple entry, multi-purpose, life-long visa for visiting India**.
- They are **exempted** from registration with Foreign Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or Foreign Registration Officer (FRO) for any length of stay in India.
- OCI cardholders can open special bank accounts in India, they can buy non-farm property and exercise ownership rights and can also apply for a driver's licence and PAN card.
  - However, **OCI does not confer political rights.**
    - It means they do not get voting rights, cannot hold a government job, purchase agricultural or farm land, cannot run for public office either, nor can they travel to restricted areas without government permission.

Additional Information (Acquiring Indian Citizenship)

- Indian citizenship can be acquired in several ways as per the **Citizenship Act, 1955.**
- **Citizenship by Birth:** Any person born in India on or after January 26, 1950, is a citizen of India by birth.
  - However, there are certain exceptions for children of foreign diplomats and enemy aliens.
- **Citizenship by Descent:** A person is considered an Indian citizen by descent if they were born outside India and either of their parents were Indian citizens at the time of their birth.
- **Citizenship by Registration:** Certain categories of foreigners can acquire Indian citizenship by registration.
  - It includes persons of Indian origin who are ordinarily resident in India for seven years before making an application for registration.
- **Citizenship by Naturalization:** Foreigners who have resided in India for **twelve years** (throughout the period of twelve months immediately preceding the date of application and for eleven years in the aggregate in the fourteen years preceding the twelve months) are eligible for Indian citizenship by naturalisation.
- **Citizenship by Incorporation of Territory:** If any territory becomes a part of India, the Government of India specifies the persons who among the people of the territory shall be citizens of India.

Source: IE

AYUSHMAN BHARAT SCHEME

In News

- The Niti Aayog report found a **'huge gap'** in cancer screening at Ayushman centres.

About Ayushman Bharat

- It was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC).**
- It comprising of two interrelated components, which are -
  - **Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs):** In February 2018, the Government of India announced the creation of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) by transforming the existing Sub Centres and Primary Health Centres. These centres are to deliver Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) bringing healthcare closer to the homes of people. They cover both, maternal and child health services and non-communicable diseases, including free essential drugs and diagnostic services.

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** It was launched on 23rd September, 2018 in Ranchi, Jharkhand
  - It is the largest health assurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 12 crores poor and vulnerable families (approximately 55 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population.
  - The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) for rural and urban areas respectively.

Source: IE

FOOT ROT DISEASE

Context

- Punjab Agricultural University has developed biocontrol agent Trichoderma Asperellum to combat 'foot rot' disease, prevalent in Basmati rice varieties.

Foot rot disease

- **Foot rot is a fungal disease** caused by the fungus **Fusarium Verticillioides.**
- It affects **Basmati rice** crops particularly at the seedling stage. It might also cause infection after transplantation in case infected seedlings are transplanted.
- Rice is cultivated in two stages. Seeds are first sown in a nursery bed, where they sprout and grow into seedlings.
  - Then they are transplanted into a well-puddled and prepared field.
- The pathogen spreads the **infection through the root of the plant**, and eventually leads to the colonization of the stem base.

Source: IE

VISA WAIVER AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND MOLDOVA

Context

- India and Moldova signed an agreement on visa waiver for diplomatic and official passports.

About

- The agreement will allow holders of diplomatic and official passports of either country to travel to the other, without a visa.
- **Diplomatic relations** between India and Moldova were established in **1992.**

Moldova

- Moldova, is a **landlocked country** lying in the northeastern corner of the **Balkan region of Europe.** It is bordered by **Ukraine and Romania.**
- **Rivers:** Prut river, Dniester river, Danube River etc.
- It lies to the east of the great arc of the **Carpathian Mountains.**

Source: AIR

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