

1. World Tuberculosis Day

Context:

- Recently, World Tuberculosis (TB) Day has observed on 24th March every year to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences.
- It is chosen to commemorate the anniversary of Dr. Robert Koch's discovery of the cause of Tuberculosis (*Mycobacterium Tuberculosis*) in 1882.

About Tuberculosis:

- It remains the world's deadliest infectious killer. Its theme for 2020 is 'It's time'.
- It puts the accent on the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to
 - ✓ scale up access to prevention and treatment, build accountability,
 - ✓ ensure sufficient and sustainable financing including for research,
 - ✓ promote an end to stigma and discrimination, promote an equitable,
 - ✓ rights-based and people-centered TB response.
- It is caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that most often affect the lungs.
- It is spread from person to person through the air. When people with TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats. It is a treatable and curable disease. It is treated with a standard 6 month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
- **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.

About Global Efforts against TB:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a joint initiative "**Find. Treat. All. #EndTB**" with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership.

About India's Efforts against TB:

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is implementing the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025).

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- The President of India had appealed to all the stakeholders to come together to reinforce the efforts in "TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign".

2. Yakshagana

Why in News?

- The voluntary community trust has recently name-d Yakshavahini has made more than 900 Yakshagana scripts digitised and available online for Free.

About Yakshagana

- It is a traditional theatre form of Karnataka.
- It is a temple art form that depicts mythological stories and Puranas.
- It is performed with massive headgears, elaborate facial make-up and vibrant costumes and ornaments.
- It is also performed in Malayalam as well as Tulu the dialect of south Karnataka.
- It is performed with percussion instruments like chenda, maddalam, jagatta or chengila and chakratala or elathalam.

About National Mission for Manuscripts:

- It was launched by the Ministry of Culture in 2003. It has the mandate of identifying, documenting, conserving and making accessible the manuscript heritage of India.
- It is also developing an app to make around 3 lakh manuscripts accessible.

3. Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit

Why in the News?

- Saudi Arabia has proposed to convene an "extraordinary virtual G20 Leaders' Summit" on 26th March to advance a coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its human and economic implications.

Highlights:

- King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud will chair the meeting of this "extraordinary Summit".
- G20 members will be joined by leaders from invited countries, Spain, Jordan, Singapore, and Switzerland.
- As well as international organizations like the United Nations (UN), World Bank Group (WBG) and other such organizations will take part in it.

- Regional organizations will be represented by -
 - ✓ Vietnam the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),
 - ✓ South Africa the Chair of the African Union (AU),
 - ✓ The United Arab Emirates the Chair of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and
 - ✓ Rwanda the Chair of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The G20:

- The G20 is an informal group of 19 countries and the European Union, with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- The G20 membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85% of global gross domestic product, 80% of global investment and over 75% of global trade.
- The G20 operates as a forum and not as an organisation. Therefore, it does not have any permanent secretariat or management and administrative structure.
- The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.

4. New signs of COVID-19 - Anosmia and Ageusia

Why in News?

- Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists have recently noted a growing number of patients with anosmia (the abrupt loss of smell) and ageusia (loss of sense of taste).
- Hence this has made the doctors think that both anosmia and ageusia could be possible signs of COVID-19 in people who otherwise appear well.

What is Anosmia?

- Anosmia is the partial or complete loss of the sense of smell. This loss may be temporary or permanent. It is caused by a swelling or blockage in the nose that prevents odours from getting to the top of the nose. Respiratory viral infection is a common cause of loss of smell. The sense of smell usually returns when the infection is over.

What is Ageusia?

- Ageusia is a condition that is characterized by a complete loss of taste function of the tongue. People who have a reduced ability to taste are said to have Hypogeusia.

5. Cess Fund for Welfare of Construction Workers

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Labour & Employment has issued an advisory to all States and UTs to use the Cess Fund for Welfare of Construction Workers.

About the Cess Fund:

- The BOCW Cess Act, 1996, provides for the levy and collection of cess at 1-2 % of the cost of construction, as the Central government may notify.
- Currently, the cess has been levied at the rate of 1% of the cost of construction, as notified by the Central government in its official gazette.
- The cess is collected by the State governments and UTs.
- It is utilised for the welfare of building and other construction workers by the respective State Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Boards.

Highlights of the Advisory:

- The advisory comes under the provisions of the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996.
- The Act regulates the employment and conditions of service of building and other construction workers. It provides for their safety, health and welfare measures and for other matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- All State Governments/UTs have been advised to transfer funds from the Cess Fund to the account of construction workers through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.
- The financial assistance at this point in time would help to mitigate the financial crisis of construction workers to some extent and boost their morale to deal with COVID-19.

6. Quarantine works better than Airport Screening

Why in News?

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) published research that compares the effectiveness and feasibility of two approaches, attempting to contain an outbreak at the border, and quarantining symptomatic cases within the country.

Highlights:

- The research makes a case for post-travel tracking rather than border containment.

- It uses mathematical modelling to show that spending resources on quarantining symptomatic cases can achieve a meaningful impact on the disease burden rather than attempting to achieve infeasible levels of containment at the borders.
- It also accounts for the inevitability that an outburst of cases would make lab confirmations impractical. Therefore, the paper proposes “symptomatic surveillance” to be included with quarantine measures.
- The government has focused on random sampling of patients with severe symptoms and quarantining positive cases.
- In the initial weeks of rising cases in India, asymptomatic travellers were not tested. If India screened all symptomatic airport arrivals from China, the epidemic would occur in 45 to 47.7 days.
- If all asymptomatic arrivals from China were screened, India would need to identify at least 75% of asymptomatic infected arrivals in order to achieve an “appreciable” delay in the outbreak.
- If 90% were identified, the delay would be 20 days. There is no accurate, rapid test to achieve the required detection levels, the paper notes, citing other studies to show that thermal screening can miss at least 46% of infections.
- The only way to achieve the needed detection levels, in fact, may be isolation of all arrivals from the specified airports.
- The researchers built their model with two scenarios. The optimistic scenario assumes that optimistic scenario.
- The paper’s hypothetical model found that quarantining 50% of symptomatic cases within three days of their symptoms would reduce overall cases by 62% and the peak number of cases by 89% in an optimistic scenario.
- The model assumes that cases are only coming from certain regions in China, which is a major drawback. We now know that many cases in India have actually come from the Middle East and the UK.

7. Invest India Business Immunity Platform

Why in News?

- Invest India Business Immunity Platform launched to help businesses withstand COVID- 19.

Highlights:

- It was launched by Invest India, India's national investment promotion & facilitation agency, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The platform, hosted on the Invest India website, is designed as a comprehensive resource to help businesses and investors get real-time updates on India's active response to COVID-19.
- This dynamic and constantly updating platform keeps a regular track on developments with respect to the virus, provides latest information on various central and state government initiatives, gives access to special provisions, and answers and resolves
- While COVID-19 continues to disrupt normal life, the impact of this crisis on businesses across the country is being continuously assessed.
- The portal also maps and highlights the response mechanism put in place by leading Indian companies such as sanitation of staff vehicles, placing orders in alternate markets, disabling biometric attendance systems, setting up of medical task force, requesting trainees to go home, business continuity plan, barring entry of visitors, suspension of air travel, usage of video-conferencing and tele-conferencing, developing online solutions and other unique initiatives.

8. Hantavirus Infection in China

- A man in China died of hantavirus, a disease spread through rodents, in Yunnan province. The 32 other passengers in the bus with the man were tested for the virus.

Highlights:

- The hantavirus report came as China is currently grappling with coronavirus which has resulted in the death of 3,277 people in the country, mostly in its epicentre Hubei province and its capital Wuhan.
- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome is a severe, sometimes fatal, respiratory disease in humans caused by infection with hantaviruses. The period of severe respiratory distress.
- The World Health Organization has categorised hantavirus infection as zoonotic, or a disease which is communicable from animals to humans, viral respiratory disease which spreads from rodents.
- The symptoms of the disease include headache, dizziness, chills fever, muscle pain, and stomach problems, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, and abdominal pain.

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- The next stage of the infection begins with the onset of respiratory distress and low blood pressure.
 - The infection in humans is acquired primarily through inhalation of aerosols or contact with infected rodent excreta, droppings, or saliva of infected rodents.
 - Hantaviruses in the Americas are known as “New World” hantaviruses and may cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). Other hantaviruses, known as “Old World” hantaviruses, are found mostly in Europe and Asia and may cause haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS).

