

1. Worrying Trends in Nutrition Indicators in NFHS-5 Data

Why in News?

- The NFHS-5 factsheets for India and all states and Union territories are now out. At First Glance, it appears to be a mixed bag — much to cheer about, but concern areas remain.

Positives from the NFHS-5 survey:

- Change in demographic trends: For the first time since the NFHS 1992-93 survey, the sex Ratio is slightly higher among the adult population.
- Improvement in sex ratio at birth: For the first time in 15 years that the sex ratio at birth has Reached 929 (it was 919 for 1,000 males in 2015-16).
- The total fertility rate has also dropped from 2.2 per cent to a replacement rate of 2 per cent, albeit with not much change in the huge fertility divide between the high and low Fertility States.
- Improvement in literacy level of women: There has been an appreciable improvement in general literacy levels and in the percentage of women and men who have completed 10 years or more of schooling, which has reached 41 per cent and 50.2 per cent respectively.
- Improvements in health indicators: The health sector deserves credit for achieving a significant improvement in the percentage of institutional births, antenatal care, and children's Immunisation Rates.
- There has also been a consistent drop in neonatal, infant and child mortality rates — a decrease of around 1 per cent per year for neonatal and infant mortality and a 1.6 per cent decrease per year for under five mortality rate.

Nutrition: Area of Concern:

- Increase in anaemic people: India has become a country with more anaemic people since NFHS-4 (2015-16), with anaemia rates rising significantly across age groups, ranging from children below six years, adolescent girls and boys, pregnant women, and women between 15 to 49 years.
- Why anaemia is a concern? Adverse effects of anaemia affect all age groups — lower physical and cognitive growth and alertness among children and adolescents, and lesser capacity to learn and play, directly impacting their future potential as productive citizens.
- Further, Anaemia among adolescent girls (59.1 per cent) advances to maternal Anaemia and is a major cause of maternal and infant mortality and general morbidity and ill health in a community.

- The detailed report will explain why a dedicated programme like Anaemia Mukht Bharat which focused on IFA consumption failed to gain impetus.
- Slow pace of improvement in nutritional indicators: Between NFHS 4 and NFHS 5, the percentage of children below five years who are moderately underweight has reduced from 35.8 per cent to 32.1 per cent.
- Moderately stunted children have fallen from 38.4 per cent to 35.5 per cent, moderately wasted from 21 per cent to 19.3 per cent and severely wasted have increased slightly from 7.5 per cent to 7.7 per cent.
- • Inadequate diet: The root cause for this is that the percentage of children below two years receiving an adequate diet is a mere 11.3 per cent, increasing marginally from 9.6 per cent in NFHS-4.

Way Forward:

- India's nutrition programmes must undergo a periodic review.
- The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which is perceived as the Guardian of the Nation's Nutritional well-being must reassess itself and address critical intervention Gaps, both conceptually and programmatically, and produce rapid outcomes.

2. CSTO troops deployed in Kazakhstan

Why in News?

- A Moscow-led Military Alliance called Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) dispatched troops to help quell mounting unrest in Kazakhstan.

Ongoing Situation in Kazakhstan:

- Long seen as one the most stable of the ex-Soviet republics of Central Asia, energy-rich Kazakhstan is facing its biggest crisis.
- There are ongoing protests over rising fuel prices escalated into widespread unrest.
- The nationwide protests are also signifying a wider, region-wide longing for political change.
- Under increasing pressure, Kazakh President appealed to the Russia for CSTO army to be deployed in Kazakhstan.

Concerns over CSTO Troop's Deployment:

- It is argued that domestic turmoil could be utilized by Russian nationalists for Asserting their claims in Northern Kazakhstan.

What is CSTO?

- The CSTO is a Russia-led military alliance of seven former Soviet states that was created in 2002.
- Current CSTO members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.
- Afghanistan and Serbia hold observer status in the CSTO.
- Its purpose is to ensure the collective defence of any member that faces external Aggression.

Outlined Functions of CSTO:

- Version of NATO: It has been described by political scientists as the Eurasian counterpart of NATO, which has 29 member states, while the CSTO has just six.
- Arms trade and mutual defense: CSTO supports arms sales and manufacturing as well as military training and exercises, making the CSTO the most important multilateral defence Organization in the former Soviet Union.
- Non- proliferation of weapons: CSTO also coordinates efforts in fighting the illegal circulation of weapons among member states and has developed law enforcement training for its members in pursuit of these aims.

What does CSTO Membership Provide?

- Barring relations with NATO: While CSTO membership means that member states are barred from joining other military alliances, limiting, for example, their relationship with NATO.
- Benefits in arms import from Russia: Its members receive discounts, subsidies, and other Incentives to buy Russian arms, facilitating military cooperation.
- Assurance against military conquest: In the CSTO, aggression against one signatory is perceived as aggression against all. It however remains unclear whether this feature works in practice.

3. Sea Dragon 22 exercise

Why in News?

- Recently, the US Sea Dragon 22 exercise began along with the navies of India, Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea in the Pacific Ocean.

Highlights:

- India, Japan, Australia and the US are also part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and also participate in the Malabar exercise.
- Sea Dragon is a US-led multi-national exercise designed to practice and discuss Anti-submarine warfare tactics to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It Is an annual exercise.
- The exercise assumes significance in the face of strained relations that some countries have with China and the growing forays of the PLA-Navy into the Indian ocean region.
- The Indian Navy has recently inducted two more Poseidon 8I maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft, which would further boost its ability to keep an eye over the Chinese ships and submarines in the region.

4. Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India

Why in News?

- Recently, the Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change has launched the 'Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India' under which 50 of these big cats will be introduced in the next five years.

Highlights:

- The action plan was launched at the 19th meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).
- NTCA is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- Last year (2021), the Supreme Court lifted its seven-year-long stay on a proposal to introduce African Cheetahs from Namibia into the Indian habitat.
- Reintroduction' of a species means releasing it in an area where it is capable of surviving.
- Reintroductions of large carnivores have increasingly been recognised as a strategy to conserve threatened species and Restore Ecosystem Functions.
- The cheetah Is the only large carnivore that has been eliminated, mainly by over-hunting in India in historical times.
- The conservation of the cheetah will revive grasslands and their biomes and habitat, much like Project Tiger has done for forests and all the species that have seen their numbers go up.

5. Green Energy Corridor (GEC) Phase-II

Why in News?

- Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the scheme on Green Energy Corridor (GEC) Phase-II for Intra-State Transmission System (InSTS).

Highlights:

- Phase 1 of the Green Energy Corridor is already under implementation in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan.
- It is working for the grid integration and power evacuation of about 24GW of Renewable Energy.
- It will facilitate grid integration and power evacuation of approximately 20 GW of Renewable Energy (RE) power projects in seven States namely, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- The transmission systems will be created over a period of five years from Financial Year 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- It is targeted to be set up with a total estimated cost of Rs. 12,031 crores, and the Central Finance Assistance (CFA) will be 33% of the project cost.
- The CFA will help in offsetting the Intra-State transmission charges and thus keep the power costs down.
- It aims at synchronizing the electricity produced from renewable resources, such as wind and solar, with the conventional power stations in the grid.
- It aims to achieve the target of 450 GW installed RE capacity by 2030.
- The objective of the GEC is to evacuate approx. 20,000 MW of large-scale renewable power and improvement of the grid in implementing states.
- It will contribute to the long-term energy security of India and will promote ecologically sustainable growth by reducing carbon footprint.
- It will facilitate in generating large direct and indirect employment opportunities for both the skilled and Unskilled Personnel.